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## **Crises, Deficits, and Ideologies in the Congressional Debates of the NCLB: How Presidential Influence Impacted Early Childhood Education Initiatives**

Winnifred Diane Hall  
*University of Tennessee, Knoxville*

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Winnifred Diane Hall entitled "Crises, Deficits, and Ideologies in the Congressional Debates of the NCLB: How Presidential Influence Impacted Early Childhood Education Initiatives." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Susan M. Benner, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Amos Hatch, Gina Barclay-McLaughlin, Benita Howell

Accepted for the Council:

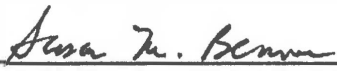
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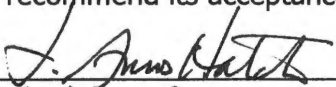
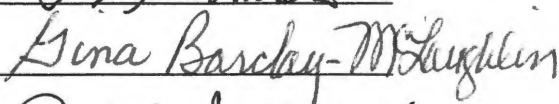
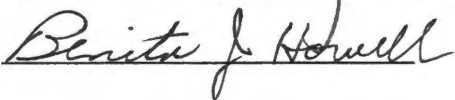
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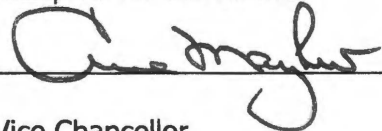
  
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Accepted for the Council

  
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Vice Chancellor

And Dean of Graduate Studies

Thesis  
2006b  
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Crises, Deficits, and Ideologies in the Congressional Debates of the NCLB:  
How Presidential Influence Impacted Early Childhood Education Initiatives

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Winnifred Diane Hall

August 2006

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## ABSTRACT

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, was proposed by President George W. Bush in January 2001, debated by the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress of the United States throughout the following spring, and signed into law on January 8, 2002. The need for reform was predicated on the belief that there was a crisis in education and that our schools were failing to adequately prepare children to succeed and compete on a global level. Reading was singled out as a particular area of concern that the new legislation would address. This qualitative study sought to discover how the Bush administration impacted education - specifically early childhood education - through a new education policy and what role ideologies played in mandating specific requirements within the legislation. The data for this study included Presidential speeches and position papers, and the transcripts of the NCLB debates in both houses of Congress. Three cornerstone issues were selected from the results for discussion: testing, failure, and parent involvement, with cultural deficit theories providing the theoretical foundation for the study. Analysis of the discourse revealed that the President and his ideological beliefs did influence the direction and substance of the reform effort as evidenced by his two proposed early childhood reading programs included in the final bill. Conservative ideologies, both radical and centrist, were the basis for specific requirements in the areas of accountability, standards of excellence, and testing.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

In January 2001, the citizens of the United States witnessed the changing of the guard - American style. The rhetoric, the promises, the speeches, and the mud-slinging that accompany a presidential campaign had once again cycled through the American political landscape. It repeated the phenomenal process that had successfully elected and inaugurated a president every four years since George Washington became the first president of the United States, in 1786. President Bill Clinton had led a Democratic administration for the past eight years and had handed over the reins to George W. Bush, a Republican. This signaled both a change of leadership and a change in the ideological viewpoint of the governing administration. Whereas Bill Clinton had served with a liberal agenda, George Bush referred to himself as a "compassionate conservative."

This transition raised the issue of how an ideological shift in the presidential administration would affect policymaking for the next four, and possibly eight, years. A change in the political party can sometimes spell more modifications to policy than when a different individual of the same party becomes President. How much authority does a new President really wield, though? Does he (or hopefully someday, she) have a greater influence on the direction of the country or does the ideology he brings with him assert the most influence? There is no way to determine the effect a president has on policymaking without research that studies this phenomenon.

## **Rationale**

During George Bush's campaign to be president, he spoke of education being in a "crisis" in this country and that he wanted to make education reform one of his top priorities. He had mandated educational reform while governor of Texas, calling it "The Miracle in Texas," after initial studies showed that education test scores had improved under his new policies, and now he was proposing to do the same for the entire country. He did not realize, however, that additional studies would determine there was no "miracle in Texas," and that scores had, in fact, remained flat (Coles, 2003).

President Bush vowed to "leave no child behind" in his educational reform strategy and outlined his plan in a policy paper titled, "A Blueprint for Education Reform." In this plan, he called for increased federally-mandated testing in grades 3 through 8, more accountability for educational successes and failures in the schools, greater parent involvement, and a reading initiative geared to the preschool to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students who need additional help in reading. Bush brought with him a cadre of education advisors, some of whom were educators and some who were not, but they shared a conservative ideology and a will to redefine education policy to reflect their particular worldview.

## **Personal Biases**

I have been an educator for almost twenty years and have always had a special concern for children who, due to unfortunate circumstances, have had to deal with more stresses in their lives than their peers. Whether working with populations of children who have disabilities or children from rural Appalachia whose families have to cope with the demoralizing effects of poverty, I have always felt that the goal of education should

be to help every child reach his or her maximum potential in life. Likewise, I have never been comfortable with popular euphemisms that label children unfairly or that stereotype a particular group of children. Hearing or reading the phrase "at risk," always elicits a negative reaction from me as I do not believe children should ever be given a label that could discourage or demean them.

My political orientation is a progressive one - definitely a liberal outlook on the world rather than a conservative worldview. There are some areas where I may favor a more centrist stance, such as in fiscal matters, but I always take the most progressive position toward education and in all areas concerning children and their welfare.

My desire to advocate for better educational opportunities for children and a search for a dissertation research topic coincided with a change in the presidential administration and the likelihood of major policy changes in education. I did not know what the exact changes would be or how much of the new policy would cover the field of early childhood education, my primary field of study, but President Bush was promising major reforms and the media was buzzing with questions about the future of education. This was enough to pique my interest and though I knew little at the time about policy studies, this topic appeared to be one that would contribute new information to the educational field.

Cursory research of the topic led to the development of a proposal and research questions that would guide the study of President Bush's education reform initiatives. I determined at this point that an analysis of the rhetoric within the reform process would be interesting, perhaps unusual, and add to the literature of the field. I chose qualitative methodology to guide my analysis as this was the vehicle that would both answer my

research questions and provide rich descriptions of how the process of educational reform progressed from a vision to a policy in one year.

### **Objectives of the Study**

With the convergence of my interests and national events impacting education, I designed a qualitative research study to discover the impact a new presidential administration has on educational policy. I also wanted to know how federally-funded early childhood education programs would be affected by President Bush's proposals to reform education. To this end, I decided to use President Bush's policy blueprint and his speeches regarding educational reform as my data sources, along with the transcripts of the debates in Congress on the President's reform initiatives. By using the President's own words and the actual rhetoric of the Senators and Representatives, I hoped to uncover meaning embedded in the data not previously exposed by studies of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The research questions that guided the discovery process were as follows:

1. What initiatives did the Bush administration propose through the *Blueprint for Education Reform* that would impact early childhood education?
2. What role did ideologies play in the development of proposals and the debates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, specifically as they impacted educational programs for the pre-kindergarten to third-grade age groups?

One reason politicians suggest changes to policy is for the purpose of aligning programs more closely with their own particular ideologies. Specific discourses then emerge from the process of policy change, based on the ideological stance of the players and the actions taken to effect the changes. Through locating and analyzing the

rhetoric of the players involved in this process, I hoped to discover the particular discourses that would provide the foundation for a narrative account of the President's effect on educational policy.

## CHAPTER II

### RESEARCH CONTEXT

This study is situated in the language and texts from events, speeches, and debates, that began when President George W. Bush sent an educational reform package to the United States Congress on January 23, 2001, shortly after his first presidential inauguration. Although the debates officially ended when President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law January 8, 2002, the process actually culminated in the summer of 2001, when the floor debates of this bill were completed.

In January 2001, the President presented his education reform package in a policy paper entitled, "The Blueprint for Education Reform." He introduced his primary goal for reform in the Blueprint as, "transforming the federal role in education so that no child is left behind" (Education Blueprint, 2001). The phrase, "no child left behind" was used repeatedly by both Republican and Democratic members of the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress during the debates of this legislation. It is an example of how, in the process of policy deliberations, individuals with opposing ideologies may use similar language or rhetoric, but situate it within opposing concepts, which will be discussed further in this chapter.

The President's blueprint for reform, the speeches he gave regarding educational reform, and the debates of the bill in Congress, provide the data used in this study. Cultural deficit theories provided the conceptual context or the foundation for my analysis of the data and aided in discovering answers to the following research questions:

1. What initiatives did the Bush administration propose through the *Blueprint for Education Reform* that would impact early childhood education?



2. What role did ideologies play in the development of proposals and the debates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, specifically as they impacted educational programs for the pre-kindergarten to third-grade age groups?

As a means to uncover the information embedded within the process of proposing and debating the NCLB, I chose one theoretical perspective, in particular, to guide me through the analysis. I wanted to know what President Bush meant when he said, "We will leave no child behind." There is a difference between the belief that many children already lag behind and need the help of the federal government, and the belief that we can prevent children from falling behind through targeted programs funded by the federal government. A belief that children in impoverished circumstances, who lag behind, are headed toward lives of dependency or crime is based on a cultural deficit theory, i.e., a belief that poverty carries particular characteristics and outcomes that are predestined unless a major intervention program redirects a child's journey through the world of education. Prevention is based on the belief that early childhood education can build on the strengths a child possesses while fostering the socialization skills along with the pre-academic skills needed for success in school.

Within this review of the literature I begin by covering Cultural Deficit Theory - how it came to be part of the American educational process, along with variations of the theory, as it serves as the theoretical framework for this research study. As a counterpoint to the cultural deficit theory, I explore literature that supports children and families by proposing an emphasis on success rather than failure. I point out the role of Project Head Start, its beginnings and its usefulness today, and discuss how this provides a backdrop for the proposals in early childhood education in the NCLB. In

addition to reviewing theories and programs, I summarize some of the history of educational reform in America and show how this could be informing the changes proposed today. Lastly, I provide a brief sketch of how Congress works, as this is critical to understanding what happened within the contexts of the debates.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Deficit Theories**

Deficit thinking is a particular worldview in which those in impoverished circumstances are viewed as the carriers of pathologies or deficiencies that negatively affect their lives (Valencia, 1997; Ryan, 1971). Deficit theories were developed to explain how certain individuals or groups were responsible for the onset and continuation of their various social or educational problems. These theories were not entirely outgrowths of the 1960s ideology of breaking the cycle of poverty, though this era saw the proliferation of numerous variants of deficit theories. Throughout history, when one group with power perceived those without power as possessing deficiencies due to their race, religion, ethnic heritage, or cultural adaptations, deficit thinking has been the foundation of these beliefs.

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education*, that separate, segregated schools for Black and White students were no longer acceptable (Pearl, 1997). This landmark ruling was important for several reasons. It demonstrated that the government would get involved in local education policies when needed, but it also triggered an unanticipated change in how minority and poor children were viewed and subsequently labeled. The ruling marked a shift in the focus from deficiencies equated with race that had influenced policy making up to the 1950's, to policies founded on

deficiencies of culture by policy makers who now equated socioeconomic status with ability. The shift in focus was one from nature, or what was inherent within an individual, to nurture, which addressed the multiple effects of one's environment on their development. Culture became the predominant keyword with the application of the concept of culture being heavily influenced by anthropological and sociological studies (Giroux, 1981). The work of anthropologist Oscar Lewis, in particular, greatly influenced this new wave of cultural deficit theories (Valencia, 1997; Valentine, 1971).

### The "Culture of Poverty" Theory

Lewis theorized that a culture of poverty most frequently developed when a stratified social and economic system was breaking down or being replaced by another or during periods of rapid technical change (Lewis, 1965). He noted this occurrence in urban and rural slums, and described the culture of poverty in terms of interrelated social, economic and psychological traits. The most likely candidates for the culture of poverty, Lewis wrote, were people who came from the lower strata of a rapidly changing society who were already partially alienated from that society. Individuals within the culture of poverty produced very little wealth and received little in return. They knew only of their own troubles and their own way of life and appeared generally unable to plan for the future (Lewis, 1959). Those Lewis identified as members of the culture of poverty possessed similar behavior traits that he identified as a positive cultural adaptation to the environment of poverty, though the traits themselves carried negative connotations (Foley, 1997).

Lewis never intended his work to be used to support educational programs (Lewis, 1971) and, in particular, programs that appropriated and misused his model to

explain negative behaviors and poor performance of specific individuals. It was, however, the framework from which cultural deprivation as a psychological model grew and was then used to rationalize the need for compensatory education programs.

### Cultural Deficit Theory

The family has been central to most cultural deficit theories (Pearl, 1997). The cultural deficit model singles out the family unit as the transmitter of deficiencies. Cultural deficit theorizing is only cultural to the extent that it holds that a self-perpetuation of culture of the lower class allegedly is without adequate "intellectual stimulation - an absence of books and printed materials" (p. 148), and that its members have a limited exposure to language. Implied within this framework is that the home environment - specifically, the parents - is responsible for the "lack" of culture, meaning, they lack middle-class values (Valentine, 1971).

Families living in poverty are viewed as pathological - a disease metaphor (Pearl, 1997). It explains why their children do not perform as well in school as children who come from middle-class homes. Cultural deficit theorizing has been used to call attention to homes of the economically disadvantaged, noting that these homes do not provide enough sensory stimulation for proper child development. The mother is thought to undervalue the role of education in her child's future well-being. The child is believed unable to develop a proper sense of space and time because of crowded home conditions and lax schedules, along with numerous other highlighted problems. Consequently, the model postulates, the child from this environment is full of deficits - cognitively underdeveloped, linguistically impaired, fatalistic, has low self-esteem, little motivation, and poor impulse control (Valencia, 1997; Valentine, 1971). The

identification of these deficits, believed to be related to low income and the home environment, led government officials to decide something had to be done to address the problems. Project Head Start was conceived of as a result of these concerns.

### **Project Head Start**

Project Head Start was conceptualized by its designers as a means through which intervention during a child's preschool years, could lead to the end of poverty (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1980). The Democratic administration, with President Lyndon Johnson at the helm in the White House, was hoping to set a standard for politicians, researchers, educators and social scientists to follow in order to win the economic "War on Poverty." Johnson had declared "war" on the vicious cycle of poverty stating, "We are going to eliminate poverty by education . . . People are going to learn their way out of poverty" (p. 101). His intent was to change the individuals who lived in poverty by teaching them middle-class values that would, in turn, educate them out of poverty.

Project Head Start was authorized by Congress in 1965, as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. This compensatory education program for children three- to five-years-old, began that year as a six-week summer program that served 560,000 children across the nation in rural centers, urban centers, and even in a tiny Eskimo village (Payne, Mercer, Payne, & Davison, 1973). In 1967, full-year programs were funded and developed all across the United States. The administration of the Head Start Program was moved from the Office of Economic Development to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) in 1969, later renamed the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Although President Johnson envisioned Head Start as a means to end poverty, Zigler never believed that early childhood education could stop the cycle of poverty but instead, viewed Head Start as an ecological approach to help children and families in all areas of concern so they could experience success in school and in their lives (Schorr, 2001). The ecological approach provided the means through which changes in the child's environment, begun by empowering parents, would produce positive consequences outside of the Head Start arena.

Bronfenbrenner conceived of a model for the Head Start program that recognized the complex interaction of variables in the home and in the school, but that also incorporated the child as an active player in this process. This "whole child" philosophy "embraced several areas of concern: nutrition, physical and mental health, parent involvement, social services for families and early childhood education" (Zigler & Styfco, 1993, p. 3). Of these components, the parent involvement element was unprecedented in the important role it gave to parents in the "planning, administration and daily activities" (p. 4) of the program. Bronfenbrenner's notion that interventions must include the children, their parents, and the community, for the program to be effective, was the impetus behind the strong parental component. But even he underestimated the importance of parent involvement in the Head Start program.

Zigler tells a story of Dr. Bronfenbrenner's visit to a Head Start center in Appalachia in 1965 (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). He sat in the back of a room that was sparsely furnished, had few materials for the children, and was located in a old building with benches instead of desks. It was hot outside and the windows had to be left open

for air to circulate. The children were all quietly working with paper and crayons, and the parents, who were so proud of this new program and were unwilling to let anything disrupt the children's activities, walked around the classroom with fly swatters. Before a fly had a chance to land on a child and disturb her "school work," one of the parents spotted it and the pest was gone, thereby allowing the children to continue unperturbed. This simple act of preventing what could have been an annoying problem was averted because the parents cared so about this new program and the opportunities they could envision for their children's future successes. Today, Zigler reports, parent involvement is regarded as crucial to the success of not only Head Start, but any early intervention program as well as later education years (1993). The Head Start Program continues to serve families, is a model for parent involvement, and though not meeting President Johnson's goal of ending the cycle of poverty, has prepared three generations of children to start school on a more level playing field.

### **Compensatory Educational Programming**

Project Head Start was the first major legislation for children of the genre, compensatory education. Programs that were developed under this category were designed for children who, because of various factors in their environment, including family income and parental level of education, were believed to be suffering from cultural deprivation (Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1964; Placier, 1996). Bloom et al. (1964) wrote:

What is needed to solve our current as well as future crises in education is a system of compensatory education which can prevent or overcome earlier deficiencies in the development of each individual. . . . Compensatory education, as we understand it is not the reduction of all education to the least common denominator. It is a type of education which should help socially disadvantaged students without reducing the quality of education for those who are progressing

satisfactorily under existing educational conditions (p. 4).

The developer's primary purpose for Head Start, as recalled by one of the original founders years later, was not the elimination of poverty through the raising of IQ scores, as President Johnson had publicly promoted. Head Start was designed to foster the same attitudes and aptitudes nurtured in middle-class children, thought to be responsible for academic and vocational success (Zigler & Anderson, 1979).

Many of those who were responsible for insuring that the program was proposed initially, felt its purpose was to compensate for what was lacking in the environment of children living in poverty. They believed that the cognitive and language scores of these children must be raised (Pearl, 1997) and what some called "cultural familial mental retardation" (Blatt & Garfunkel, 1969), be reduced. The belief at the time was that poverty caused this type of mental retardation, along with other deficits, and intervention programs were needed to offset (or compensate for) these multiple problems and save the millions of children doomed to continue the poverty cycle. These beliefs were the foundation for the cultural deficit theories.

In his "Eight Stages of Man" theory (Erickson, 1963), Erickson removed the school, and with it, society at large, from any responsibility for motivating the child toward success and put the onus for academic success entirely on the family. He promoted an "inadequate socialization deficit interpretation" (Pearl, 1997, p. 148), noting that a child will have balanced development only if provided the resources at earlier stages to lay the foundation for later stages of development. If a child is deprived of love and nurture in infancy, he will develop chronic mistrust and not be ready to develop at the next stage. This child accepts defeat and will not be industrious in



school. In parenthood, he will pass along these accumulated deficits to his children (Erickson, 1963).

With the beginnings of compensatory early childhood education, it came to be believed that education could be the great equalizer and the primary means through which poor individuals could lift themselves out of poverty. Curricula were another means to ameliorate poverty's hold on children's development, especially their language development. This was the theoretical basis for the DISTAR Language program, designed to offset the effects of language deprivation (Bereiter & Engemann, 1966).

Based on experience from developing the Head Start program, Zigler and Muenchow noted, "Too many programs for disadvantaged children make the mistake of failing to begin with projects to which the children can bring some relevant prior knowledge or experience" (1992, p. 19). Though much of the research of the day that supported the beginning of Head Start was of a deficit thinking nature, those individuals who were given the task of developing the Head Start program, held no such beliefs. The committee planning the Head Start Program in the early 1960's, wanted to ensure that "success experiences" (p. 19) were an important part of the program.

Decades later, this notion of the need for successful educational endeavors was reinforced in an analysis and critique of deficit thinking (Valencia & Solorzano, 1997). In *Children and Families "At Promise": Deconstructing the Discourse of Risk*, Swadener and Lubeck (1995) offered a model for replacing deficits with possibility, pessimism with optimism. This work explored the historical contexts of risk and deficit and proposed a means through which "promise" could replace "risk" for children who have difficulty in school due to any number of factors. Swadener (1995) noted that the emphasis, too

frequently, was on "getting the child ready for school instead of the school getting ready for the child" (p.18).

The continuing importance of Head Start is apparent as it has continued to be re-appropriated through the years, but not without politicians wanting to alter its purpose to suit the ideology of the majority administration. Though there appears to be more research and writings that reference the deficit model for school success or failure, literature that looks at children through a more holistic, ecological, or promising, lens, can be found in the literature.

### **Human Ecological Systems Theory**

Urie Bronfenbrenner is a psychologist who began his research on children and families in the same era as Oscar Lewis. He developed a theory of human development based not on deficits or pathologies in behavior, but on how a child develops in relation to her environment and the settings in which she moves and interacts throughout her lifetime. Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm (1994/1997) viewed the person as a dynamic entity that both impacted and was impacted by environmental settings in increasingly more complex, reciprocal interactions with the environment over one's lifetime. The contexts in which these interactions occurred was conceived of as a nested system of concentric structures, each one located within the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The innermost structure, the microsystem, contains the relationships between an individual and his immediate environment, such as the family, school or community. The next level, the mesosystem, contains the interrelationships between or among two or more systems in which the individual actively participates. The interactions in a child's

home and the school are an example of a mesosystem. When two or more settings share relationships, at least one of which does not contain the child as an active participant, this structure is called an exosystem. An exosystem has events that affect or are affected by what happens in a setting the child inhabits. The events that occur at a parent's place of work that indirectly affect the child is an example of an exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The last system is the macrosystem which includes culture or subculture beliefs, ideology or in general, the blueprint for a particular socioeconomic, ethnic, religious or subcultural group. This blueprint reflects the contrasting belief systems and lifestyles within that group that perpetuate the ecological environment of that group. The macrosystem reflects not only what is, but also what might be if the social order were altered. It was within the macrosystem that Bronfenbrenner placed what he believed to be the dominant belief system of both American society and social/educational policy research (1979). The deficit model, he writes, has been the basis for defining children and families living in disadvantaged circumstances for the past 100 years (Bronfenbrenner & Weiss, 1983). This model assumes that any inadequacies seen in an individual's behavior or development reflect a deficiency within that person or her immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the case of young children, it is assumed that the deficiency lies within one or both parents. It is then the responsibility of the professional or practitioner to find the deficiency and correct it. The deficit model underlies much of the current and past research, policies and practices in the education and social science realms of the past 40 years.

## **The Achievement Gap**

Education, and more specifically, early childhood education, has historically been strongly tied to the assumptions and language of modern foundationalism (Skrtic, 1995). In education, modernism became synonymous with progress situated in science - specifically, the science of developmental psychology, which gave birth to the field of study in child development. Child development is regarded by the developmental psychologists as a normative, hierarchal, and universal pattern of continued progression toward an independent self. The theories of Piaget and Erickson, for example, along with numerous others, are based on this progressive developmental scheme.

This notion of a legitimate center, with its universalist core, is viewed by postmodernists as working to marginalize groups of individuals according to their race, gender, class, abilities, and other named identities. The proponents of postmodernism reject the universal theories of child development held within worldviews that are applied to all humans, regardless of the cultural contexts in which they live. Instead, postmodernists celebrate plurality and view difference through conceptual lenses that reveal multiple realities, rejecting the notion of the superiority of one group over another (Carlson & Apple, 1998).

The achievement gap is predicated on the belief that one group - the white middle-class cultural group - should serve as the cultural norm, which all other groups should strive to emulate. Of the many roles American schools have taken on, three particular functions came to the forefront of the educational ideology of the 1960's. These were: socialization into the mores of the dominant society, the transmission of the culture of this dominant society, and the selection and tracking of students into

either educational or vocational paths of instruction (Gordon & Yeakey, 1983).

Research in the past 40 years has shown that achievement has been and continues to be related to the student's socioeconomic status. Court rulings such as *Brown v. the Board of Education* in 1954 addressed equality of access, but did not solve the problems of equity. For equity to be achieved, one's educational program must be "specific to one's functional characteristics" (Gordon & Yeakey, 1983, p. 282). Our nation's creed begins with the phrase, "all men are created equal" (p. 290), but the educational community has misused this phrase by applying it to opportunity and achievement in the schools. Here, it fosters the assumption that all individuals start their schooling from the same vantage point. The environments children come from are diverse and unequal. Likewise, what they bring with them to school is dissimilar and heterogeneous. Berliner & Biddle (1995) found that "family incomes and financial support for schools are much more poorly distributed in our country than in other industrialized nations" (p. 5).

It is important that all levels of the environment in which children are engaged be considered when planning educational reforms. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described a 1969 study by Hayes and Grether in which they analyzed achievement test scores in an effort to determine why there were discrepancies in scores between children from white, advantaged families and those from black, disadvantaged families in grades 2-6 (p. 223). Most school systems look at gains made for the interval from fall through spring, but Hayes and Grether looked at the spring to fall interval. Pupils from the more advantaged families continued to gain at the same rate during this interval as they did from fall to spring. The children from disadvantaged families not only progressed more

slowly during this interval, but they reversed direction and actually lost ground. By the time they returned to school, they were much farther behind their more advantaged classmates than they had been in the spring. The authors estimated the differential in progress made during the four summers between second and sixth grades accounted for up to 80% of the differences in achievement between the two groups.

They concluded that this substantial difference in academic achievement across social class and race by the end of sixth grade was attributable not to what goes on *in* school, but what goes on *out* of school. The implications from this study are that the reforms directed toward equalizing educational opportunities and achievement may be misdirected. Huge sums of money are being (and have been for many years) spent to change schools, the curricula, and retrain teachers. If this study is correct, this money is going to areas which are not responsible for the differences in achievement. A repeat of this study years later with 1500 students in Atlanta resulted in the same findings and conclusions. The data showed that the key to higher achievement was not within the school but in its interconnections with other settings in the community and society at large.

This is not to say that what happens in school is unimportant or does not matter. Bad schools can make a bad situation worse. Good schools definitely have an effect on learning and spending money in the right areas improves learning, but children operate within multiple settings. At the mesosystem level, the interconnections between the various areas in which the developing child spends her life need to be balanced with bidirectional communication, mutual trust, and encouragement in all areas (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Lawrence Cremin sums it up best in the following statement (as cited in Berliner & Biddle, 1995):

If there is a crisis in American schooling, it is not the crisis of putative mediocrity and decline charged by the recent reports, but rather a crisis inherent in balancing the tremendous variety of demands Americans have made on their schools and colleges - of crafting curricula that take account of the needs of a modern society at the same time that they make provisions for the extraordinary diversity of America's young people: of designing institutions where well-prepared teachers can teach under supportive conditions, and where all students can be motivated and assisted to develop their talents to the fullest; and of providing the necessary resources for creating and sustaining such institutions (p. 172).

### **The Political Process Leading to the NCLB**

My studies in early childhood education have been influenced by Bronfenbrenner's ecological development theory, especially the notion of the reciprocal and bidirectional effects of the environment on child development and how the child affects the environments in which she lives. This theory of development puts an emphasis on the importance of understanding the contexts in which a child develops. After studying the deliberations of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), I realized that the NCLB designers and those who debated the legislation ignored how environment affects development except in those instances where negative consequences were discussed in the context of cultural deficits that impacted children living in impoverished situations.

Ecological systems theories provide a framework that accounts for interactions among and between individuals and groups. Just as a child affects and is affected by events in both her immediate and not-so-immediate surroundings, the NCLB was the center of activities that influenced its development and the final outcomes and to this

day is being studied for its effects on the educational environment.

The deliberations in Congress tell one part of the story of the NCLB. It is the context on which I have chosen to focus; however, events that occurred prior to the Congressional deliberations must be recounted at least in a cursory manner, for one to have a conceptual framework for the deliberations themselves.

Reading abilities and reading scores were at the center of political activities throughout the 1990's culminating in the Reading Excellence Act (REA) of 1998. Congress linked the REA to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in an effort to target students living in poverty who attended "underperforming schools" (Miskel & Song, 2004). After George Bush was inaugurated as President in January 2001, he made education reform his top priority when he presented his educational blueprint to Congress. In it, he outlined seven performance-based priorities including: improving the academic performance of disadvantaged students; boosting teacher quality; and, encouraging freedom and accountability (Education Blueprint, 2001).

President Bush promised to close the achievement gap through accountability and high standards, annual academic assessments, and consequences for the schools that failed to educate disadvantaged students. He proposed to focus on reading in the early grades through the establishment of the Reading First and Early Reading First Initiatives. Flexibility for states and the reduction of bureaucracy were two additional goals outlined in the Blueprint.

With the new initiatives, came opportunities for studying policymaking. Miskel and Song (2004) saw this as a chance to study the dynamics of the policymaking



process, working under the assumption that policies such as the NCLB are not made in isolation but are affected by complex networks of events operating in "relatively open networks" (2004, p. 89). Instead, in the process of studying the Reading First Initiative, they discovered "a small clique of inside policy entrepreneurs (p.90) who worked with elite groups of individuals to "accomplish major policy changes quickly" (p. 90).

The prominent actors in this clique were Reid Lyon, Chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); the American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Margaret LaMontagne-Spellings, who had been Governor Bush's senior education advisor; Alexander Kress, a lawyer and former Dallas School Board member; and Rod Paige, former superintendent of Houston School Districts. Kress became the President's primary lobbyist to Congress for the NCLB, Paige became Secretary of Education, and Spellings became Head of Domestic Policy (now Secretary of Education after Paige's departure in 2004).

Miskel and Song (2004) discovered through extensive interviews of prominent players in the policy process that Spellings and other White House aides actually wrote the policy for the education committees in the House and Senate, and Kress served as the negotiator and liaison with Congress. Paige remained on the periphery of the policymaking process and the AFT was the primary education consultant, with the National Teachers Association (NEA) mostly excluded from the development process.

Lyon was instrumental in the development of Reading First. Along with White House staffer Bob Sweet, he built the legislation around the findings of the National Reading Panel (NRP) Report, released on April 13, 2000, of which Lyon was the Chair

(NRP, 2000b). The essential components of the Reading First Legislation correspond to the chapter headings of the NRP. The Reading First Initiatives were ratified at the committee level, which explains why there were no deliberations on these initiatives on the House or Senate Chamber floors during the debates of the NCLB.

The National Reading Panel was created in 1997 when Reid Lyon, Chief of the NICHD convinced Congress to convene a panel to "assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the various approaches to teaching children to read". The NICHD and Reid Lyon had been pushing for scripted skills-emphasis instruction in reading since the early 1990's. Lyon was given authority by Congress to pick the 14 leading scientists in reading research (NRP, 2000a). In announcing the Report of Findings to the media in April 2000, President Bush stated that the reading panel had reviewed 100,000 studies. Actually, the reading panel found that 100,000 studies had been published on teaching children to read since 1996, and after excluding studies that did not meet their definition of "scientific," they reviewed 307 quantitative studies in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. Their findings were based on the results of a meta-analysis that pooled the results of the studies and estimated an average effect.

Coles (2001) discovered, in his study of the reading panel's results, that there were flaws in the study where correlation was confused with causation and in the congruence between the results and the *a priori* conclusions about reading before the panel began its research. Coles described one instance in which the panel proved the effectiveness of a particular reading program by comparing the performance of a treatment group to a no-treatment group. The treatment group was found to have

made "impressive" gains over the control group. What the panel's report does not say, is that there were two control groups, not one, and that the second control group was taught using a whole language approach in an informal, as-needed manner. The findings not reported showed that children in the informal group did as well as the skills group in the areas of reading and spelling.

Sally Shaywitz developed a brain glitch theory that showed how deficits in the brain are the cause of individuals not being able to read. Her research was funded by NICHD, headed by Reid Lyon, President Bush's "Reading Czar," and is said to be the "scientific proof" behind the Reading First and the Early Reading First Initiatives (Coles, 2004).

There is a problem with her research, however. According to Coles, it is flawed. He states that her claims of being able to use one particular reading program to produce "brain repair" are false and are based on invalid experimental design. Shaywitz grouped individuals into "dyslexics" and "poor readers" but was unable show the criteria used for grouping the subjects. Instead, she began with *a priori* assumptions that "dyslexics" had a brain glitch and "poor readers" did not.

In addition to the findings that the proof behind the federal reading programs was unsubstantiated, other early childhood researchers report a danger in trying to teach reading to children too soon. Quality early childhood education programs, reports Campbell (1987), do not confuse intellectual development with academic achievement. All learning in pre-kindergarten, she says, should be based on healthy socio-emotional development. Sigel (1987) agrees and goes further, stating that acceleration of academics in preschool is dangerous.

Zigler, best known as one of Head Start's developers and one of its biggest supporters, also takes on the issue of formal schooling for preschoolers. Claims that it would reduce school failures, lower drop-out rates and increase test scores are false, he says. There are no educational miracles for the effects of poverty (Zigler, 1987). He believes that preschoolers need to have developmentally appropriate educational components, but that preschools be primarily places for recreation and socialization.

### **How Congress Works**

The current system of Congressional floor debate evolved from our Founding Fathers' original plans for writing and passing governing policies. The procedures for establishing legislation in both the Senate and the House of Representatives were based on Thomas Jefferson's *Manual of Parliamentary Practice* (Dove, 1997), with variations unique to the set-up of each House. Debate was included in the original design for establishing laws as a means to ensure careful consideration was given every piece of legislation and no one person or groups of persons could pass legislation behind closed doors.

When America consisted of only 13 states or even 20 states, there was enough time to let all who desired to, come to the floor to present his side of the issue. As the nation grew, the chambers of Congress began to divide into bipartisan committees to work on legislation before it came to the floor for debate. With further growth came the need in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century for the committees to be divided into sub-committees in order for legislation to be hashed out further before it came to the floor. The committees came to be where the real debates took place and the hallways of Congress became the place deals were made, so that eventually, most Congressmen knew how they would

vote before the bill came to the Chamber for debate.

The Senate is a continuing body as contrasted with the House. Two-thirds of the Senators return without having to be re-elected, but all Representatives must stand for re-election every two years. The re-election issue, plus the number of members - 435 vs. 100 in the Senate - means that the House has had to establish rules to push legislation through in a more efficient manner than in the Senate. Additionally, the parliamentary rules have not been subjected to the same alterations (Dove, 1997). Representatives re-adopt their old rules of procedure at the inception of each Congress, often with slight modification, while Senators have not given a general reaffirmation to their rules since 1789. The rules adopted by the Senate in the first Congresses have remained in force continuously.

The floor debate process was not discarded, however, as new reasons for keeping it evolved within the political process. Today, the purposes of debating a bill on the House or Senate floor are based on the tenets of a representative democracy and the need to present a united front, albeit one divided by party affiliation, to the public. These purposes include the need to: 1) display party loyalty; 2) remind constituents of one's ideology; and, 3) reassure the public that Congress is a rational body and that the government is functioning in the best interests of its citizens.

It is important to realize when studying policy that the committees are where most of the work on a bill takes place. In committee, the bill is studied for merit, outside individuals are given the chance for input, and it is voted on to determine whether it dies or is sent to the whole chamber for debate. The House has established rules that apply to time spent on a particular bill after being marked up by the committee. All bills

must go to the Committee on Rules before they go to the House floor for general debate. This committee sets the rules for debate, including the amount of time to be allotted, which is usually no more than two hours total for any bill. The rules themselves must be debated for a set period of time, also determined by the Rules Committee in advance (Ebert-Flattau, 1983).

In the Senate, there is no Committee on Rules. Bills are placed on the legislative calendar by the Majority Leader after they clear the committees. The length of time for debating bills in the Senate is unlimited.

For one to understand how the NCLB Act proceeded as it did, from the President's presentation of his blueprint for reform to his signing of the bill, all the information related to the context of the bill must be addressed. Even when one knows the factual information regarding a bill, understanding how the bill evolved into the final product is an essential part of the study and a thorough analysis cannot be completed without it.

## **Conclusion**

In this literature review I covered the research that has been a foundation for my dissertation. I began this chapter by discussing my research purpose and goals and the context in which my research is situated. The foundational theory that I used to guide my analysis was the cultural deficit theory, one of a group of deficit theories that situates problems of individuals in poverty as residing within the individuals themselves. The Head Start program grew out of this theory, though the developers of Head Start did not adhere to such beliefs. I reviewed Head Start and compensatory education, in general, and then briefly covered human ecological systems theory, with the explanation

that I would like to see it be more of a foundation for education reform than deficit theories.

Because of the unavoidably political nature of this dissertation, I summarized the political events that led to the writing of the NCLB legislation and the key players in its development. Lastly, I provided a brief description of how Congress works, the differences in the practices of each chamber of Congress, and specific rules regarding debate.

## Chapter III

### METHODS

Early in my doctoral studies, I discovered that qualitative research more closely matched my personal approaches to solving problems than did quantitative research. Although I know how to do them and have completed quantitative studies earlier in my academic life, I am not a number-cruncher at heart. The thesis for my master's degree was a quantitative study that focused on the learning styles of two young girls who had cerebral palsy. In 1978, I had no choice but to conduct a quantitative study and was frustrated throughout the process of writing up my findings as the quantitative data did not tell the whole story of what was going on with the two girls. One of the most astounding events of the study did not show significant change even though I knew major change had taken place and this frustration led me to seek out studies that could be completed using qualitative methods rather than quantitative ones.

My interests are more closely tied to processes and descriptions of what people say or do. I want to know all the details of what went on and the "ah ha!" experience of uncovering something previously embedded in the data, making the research process an enjoyable endeavor. Quantitative research contributes critical knowledge to the educational field, and I believe the field needs more qualitative data to fill in the details.

#### **Justification for Study**

As I noted in chapter I, the timing of a new presidential administration ready to reform education and my need to conduct a doctoral research study coincided perfectly. In 2001, there was much information on reforming education, in general, and there were historical accounts of what changes past presidential administrations had



attempted or been successful in changing in education. I could not find any information on the process of reforming education policy, though, nor was there information about the actions and rhetoric of those involved in the reform process. This lack of specific data on the education reform process led to my decision to propose this study.

In early 2001, I began the preliminary research for a proposal to study the effect of a new presidential administration on the Head Start program because my field of study was early childhood education. I followed reports of the No Child Left Behind legislation as it was discussed and debated throughout 2001, by the President, his advisors, and in both Houses of Congress. By the end of 2001, the debates had ended and the legislation was passed in the House of Representatives and the Senate. As I began to delve more closely into the texts pertaining to this legislation, I discovered that there were few references to Head Start in the Senate debates and none from the House debate. There was slightly more information regarding the President's Reading First Initiatives, which would impact early childhood education, but not enough total data on early childhood on which to base a doctoral-level study.

Despite the lack of data on early childhood in the deliberations of the NCLB, I sensed that a study to explore how the NCLB proceeded from the President's first announcement to the end of the Congressional debates using what those who were involved in the process "said" about educational reform, was still a good idea. I decided to include as much as I could find about early childhood from the texts of speeches, Congressional testimony and the Congressional debates, but I would also look at the discourse of reform, generally, focusing on how the ideologies of individuals invoked particular patterns of discourse.

I have found no similar studies of a President's impact on education reform, so this endeavor to discover meaning within the discourse of educational reform will hopefully add a new understanding of how the national policy reform process works and how it effects education for those in early childhood settings and beyond.

### **Sampling Decisions**

Sampling decisions are the choices one makes when deciding on the who, what, where, and when, at the beginning of a study (Maxwell, 1996). In qualitative research, purposeful sampling (p. 70) enables the researcher to select the information needed to answer one's research questions. In this section, I will explain the decisions and selections I made while designing this study. These include the context in which the study was situated: the setting, the players, and the timeline for the study. Because the limitations of this study are closely tied to many of my sampling decisions, I will include this topic within the explanations regarding sampling.

### **Context**

Hatch (1998) noted that descriptive narratives are complex studies "that include examples of actual data and take the reader into the context to build a case for the researcher's interpretations" (p. 53). The contexts in which the data are embedded include the events that took place, the setting(s) where the events occurred, and the language use of the participants in the particular events (Maxwell, 1996). Contexts provide a background for the narrative account and highlight the uniqueness of a study that makes it different from all others. In this study, the context also has an influence on the language use of the participants as it is unique to political debating.

### Setting

The events related to this study occurred primarily in Washington, D.C. The President's initial addresses took place in the White House and the Capitol Building. After the reform process began and the legislation given to Congress for consideration, the President traveled to a variety of setting, many of these were elementary schools, in an effort to sell his educational reform package to the public. All of the Congressional testimony took place in the Capitol and the debates occurred in the chambers of the Senate or House of Representatives.

### Sources of Data

The sources in this study include the President and the members of Congress whose quotes I use in chapters IV and V. I was careful to ensure I covered the political parties' perspectives in a balanced manner. I would have liked more balance between the House and Senate, but the Senate spend more time debating the bill than did the House and therefore, the Senate had more data to choose from. I will explain how I selected particular quotes in the Data Collection section.

### Timeline

The data collected for this study came from events occurring between the President's Inauguration on January 21, 2001 and the passage of the NCLB legislation in Congress in December 2001. The debates of the NCLB occurred during April and May of 2001, so all the Congressional data is from this time period.

### Sampling Limitations

Identifying the sampling limitations of one's study helps to establish the trustworthiness of one's data (Glesne, 1999) and clarifies the reasoning behind some of

the decisions that are made. The limitations are an important aspect of the context as they explain why some aspects related to one's data were not included in the analysis.

I discussed the sampling decisions that I made in the preceding sections, and in the following paragraphs, I will relate the circumstances that imposed limitations on this study. The limitations fall into two separate categories. The first category was controlled by the parameters I set in sampling, methodology, and analysis decisions. The second category was affected by national-level events and political decisions over which I had no control.

The process of deciding what to include in this study involved many early decisions that not only set the parameters for the study, but also determined its internal limitations. Because this is a doctoral dissertation, I am limited by practicalities of size and scope. The process of developing new policies covers an extremely broad area, and because I wanted to discover the effect the president had on educational reform policy, I needed to locate the area from which I could draw the most useful data.

I chose to study the rhetoric of the participants in this policy change process, specifically the President, to see if I could discover how much influence he was able to exert in education reform and then Congress as a measure of examining their response to the President's initiatives. I also felt that if I were to find any information with regard to early childhood education, it would be within the Congressional debates rather than the President's speeches.

At the national level, limitations were imposed on me by decisions made by the President and members of Congress related to when, how, and for how long debates would be conducted or speeches given. Sometimes the rules of Congress governing time

allotted for debating set limitations on the amount of data I could collect. However, one critical event overshadowed all other events during the year 2001.

In the course of developing this proposal, national and world events that could never have been foreseen and were far outside the norm of daily living, impacted both the data and the timing for collecting data. There was a great deal of activity related to education at the beginning of President Bush's term in office. All of the floor debates in Congress took place in April and May, 2001, but after this, little was done for a period of time as the opposing political parties could not agree on what changes needed to be made. In July 2001, a Whitehouse conference and a Congressional hearing put education reform and early childhood education back in the news.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, the unspeakable happened when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Suddenly everything that had previously been important in the political arena was put on hold as the President and Congress struggled to deal with the crisis. The fallout from the terrorist attacks impacted the national economy as the country slid into a recession and appropriations were diverted to fighting terrorism in-country and overseas. Surprisingly, in December 2001, Congress quickly passed the educational legislation that had been lying dormant for over six months, and in January 2002 the President signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law.

The preceding paragraphs explained the choices I made with regard to the data and the contexts in which the data were situated. The following sections relate the process of collecting and then, analyzing the data.

## **Data Collection**

In this section, I will explain my data collection procedures, to include types of data, how they were collected, where they were located and any problems I encountered in this process (Mauch & Birch, 1998). I chose to begin my data collection with the position paper, the Blueprint for Reform, that the President presented to Congress in January. Data collection ended when debates in the Senate were concluded in May 2001, even though the legislation was not passed until December 2001.

Included in the data are speeches given by President Bush promoting his educational reform policy and some Congressional testimony. The majority of my data come from the debates in Congress that began after the NCLB legislation was approved at the committee level in the Senate and House of Representatives. The House debated the bill for two hours on May 22, 2001; the Senate debates were spread over April and May of 2001. I excluded from my data set any passages related to budgeting for the NCLB as these had little to do with actually reforming education.

### Types and Sources of Data

The process of discovering the impact of the President on education reform was made simpler through the seemingly unlimited sources of information on the Internet. The Presidential speeches, position papers, and the Congressional debates all came from the following areas of the Internet:

- \* Thomas.gov - all national legislative information, past and present
- \* Congressional Digest - transcripts of speeches, debates
- \* White House Web Site - transcripts of speeches, news releases
- \* Congressional Committee Web Sites - transcripts and schedules of

hearings, news releases

- \* Cabinet-level Department's Web Sites - schedules, press releases, activities and responsibilities of departmental offices
- \* Personal Congressional Web Sites - transcripts of speeches, opinion papers, press releases, schedules
- \* Special Event Sites - summits, conferences, panels

Thomas.gov, named after Thomas Jefferson, is the primary site for finding links to Congressional web pages. Google.com was my second choice for locating information, though Thomas.gov was the quickest route to legislative information. All sources of data actually used in the dissertation are referenced by the URL or address of the site on the Internet in accordance with APA standards. My goal was to use the widest variety of sources to ensure validity of the data and to avoid the appearance of biased data collection.

I chose quotes from the President's speeches and the Congressional debates based on particular criteria, but was careful to get a varied sampling of quotes to avoid the appearance of bias toward or against a particular group. In my initial collection of data, every member of Congress who participated in the debates was included. After completion of my analysis, I chose specific quotes as examples of the two sides of an issue; sometimes, there were three or four sides of an issue. I also selected quotes for inclusion in the results to have a balance in the political parties represented. In a couple of instances, I chose specific quotes to illustrate a lack of balance in a particular issue; for example, not a single Representative mentioned the Head Start program during the House debate.

## Data Recording Procedures

I initially designed a form to record data onto and explained the use of this form in my proposal for this study. Upon beginning the actual data collection, the form became too cumbersome and instead, I used lined, hard-back journals for my notes and memos to record the data.

I began my research by reading the President's "Blueprint for Reform" and familiarizing myself with this until I understood the main points of the President's position on education reform. Using key words from the Blueprint as a starting point, I wrote the key word or phrase at the top of each page in the journal. As I began studying the transcripts from the debates, I would write the name of the Congressman or Congresswoman on the corresponding page whenever they mentioned that key word. Along with the name, I recorded the page number of the transcript, the political party of the individual, and also divided each page according to Democrat or Republican, using a specific ink color for each party.

As I read through the debates, key words continued to be added when they appeared frequently enough to warrant their addition to my list. I studied the texts and recorded information for six months to ensure I had not missed anything of importance.

## **Methods of Analysis**

At the point at which I believed that I had the pertinent data for analysis, I started a more critical reading of the data to discover and identify categories and themes that corresponded to the key words that I had already recorded. Most texts on qualitative research refer to this process as "coding" (Maxwell, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coding "fractures" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 78) the data and rearranges it into



categories that make comparisons within and between the data easier.

The process of analyzing the data is actually conducted simultaneously with collection and interpretation of the data. Only for the purposes of explanation of my methods is the process broken down into distinct and separate steps. The data analysis process described below is eclectic, albeit inductive, using multiple means of analysis as the type of data, the methodology, and the research questions lend themselves to using emerging categories in multiple ways.

My goal in analyzing the data was to reduce it by sorting it into categories, themes and patterns using a schema - in this case, a breaking down or fracturing of the data to enable me to examine it more critically. The goal of this process is the final emergence of a consolidated picture of not only what was said by the players, but most importantly, and most interestingly, the meta-messages that had been embedded within the texts. The revelation of these messages will tell a story not readily apparent to a casual reader of the texts.

#### Steps in Analyzing the Data

I recorded categories that emerged as I read the texts, first as key words that were either taken from previously named categories in the text or that emerged from questions that I asked of the texts. The type of questions one asks of the data are sensitizing questions - they help the researcher become more sensitive to what the data is telling you, such as: "What is going on here?" or "How is this player defining the situation?" or "What is the meaning to them?" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.66). With these types of questions, I could compare the rhetoric for similarities or differences. I used the answers to develop new themes and new groupings according to similarities in

the language usage or in their ideological stance. I also grouped categories by the importance the players gave to a particular issue.

The process of asking questions of the data enables the researcher to become "sensitized" to the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). One must have this sensitivity to "see beneath the obvious and discover the new" (p. 47). Grouping the categories helped me become more sensitized as I was able to locate assumptions in the data, to find and identify ideologies of participants, and most importantly, to discover "hidden" meanings in the texts that I suspected might be there.

While actually not hidden, the meanings are embedded in the data and only through a complete immersion into the data (p. 48), through questioning, thinking, writing notes, etc., do the insights into the meanings become clear. I did not make any assumptions *a priori* about what might be hidden in the texts with regard to specific information, but given the political nature of the discourse, I expected to uncover meanings not readily apparent to a casual reader of the data.

### **Verification of the Data**

Because the categories that emerge from data in a qualitative study are both context bound and value laden due to the inherent subjectivity of the analysis, a means to ensure accuracy is an essential part of the study. Though validity is the mechanism to ensure one's analysis is accurate in a quantitative study, verification of the data is more applicable to qualitative research (Creswell, 1994). Additionally, generalizations or discussions of replication of the study do not readily apply to a qualitative study because even if identical data were collected, no two researchers would likely name categories and themes or code the data similarly.

Trustworthiness (Creswell, 1994, p. 158) is a criteria for data analysis that is applicable to qualitative research as one needs to establish internal validity within a subjective research arena. Though triangulation of qualitative data can be difficult, convergence of the data is possible by providing an audit trail of the process of naming categories and clustering and analyzing the data (Morse, 1998). This can be achieved by having ready access to all the print-outs, protocol forms, and journal notes that accumulated throughout the research process and making it available to any interested parties.

I do not have informants from my research that can check for accuracy of the data, but I have every note I made during my research process and can make this available to anyone to review and verify my research. One can follow my path from data collection, to recording, to analysis, and should be able to ascertain how my decision-making process evolved. I also have the bracketing information I wrote on my personal biases memo as a check for myself to see if I am overlooking any important patterns in the data or, conversely, if I am focusing my decisions too narrowly.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I have explained the methods employed in this research study as a means to inform others of the decisions I made and steps I took to arrive at my final discussion of the results. The reader should understand, at this point, what I chose to study, how I limited my choices, who the players were in this study, the context in which the study was situated and how I analyzed the data to arrive at my conclusions and answer my research questions.

The use of the player's actual words in the development of legislation to reform

the nation's educational system is not a common method for studying policy, but I believe the uniqueness of this study will fill a gap in our knowledge of educational policymaking.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

George W. Bush ran for President on a platform that included reforming the nation's educational system. He spoke of the need to "reclaim America's schools" (Inaugural Address, 2001) in his inaugural address on January 20, 2001, and one week later, he presented his blueprint for education reform to Congress. One year later, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

Between the day President Bush's Blueprint was presented to Congress and the day of signing the Act, many events occurred that would take the President's Principles for Reform from the White House to the floors of Congress for debate. Numerous players were involved, both behind the scenes and in the forefront of the process. Debate took place in corridors between Congressional offices under the Capitol, over supper by invitation in the White House, and in the deliberations in accordance with the Senate and House Rules for Debate.

The purpose of this research study was to discover the means through which a new presidential administration was able to impact federally-funded early education programs. This discovery process was accomplished by investigating and analyzing data related to the following research questions.

1. What initiatives did the Bush administration propose through the *Blueprint for Education Reform* that would impact early childhood education?
2. What role did ideologies play in the development of proposals and the debates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, specifically as they impacted educational

programs for the pre-kindergarten to third-grade age groups?

This chapter discusses the results of the analysis of the data as it applies to the purpose of the study and the research questions. The organization of the results is based on the President's Blueprint for Education Reform and includes both the President's views on specific issues related to reform and the Congressional response to the Presidential initiatives. The chapter is divided into six headings: each of the four principles of education reform, described in the Blueprint for Education Reform and related documents; the President's proposed program initiatives; and, examples of the ideologies or worldviews of the major players in this process that influenced the documents and debates.

Subheadings break each of the first four headings into categories related to the principles of education reform. The fifth heading describes three proposed program initiatives with Presidential and Congressional remarks pertaining to each one. The last section describes the five ideologies that influenced the development and debate of the NCLB with quotes that illustrate each of these. The ideologies are covered more in-depth in Chapter V along with the discussion of the trends, or patterns, I uncovered in my analysis of the data.

### **Principles of the Blueprint for Education Reform**

Educational excellence for all is a national issue and, at this moment, it is a presidential priority.

George Bush (Remarks on Submitting the Education Plan to Congress, 2001)

In his Blueprint of Educational Reform, President Bush outlined four principles he said were the "pillars of a blueprint of reform" adding:

We must focus on things that work. Too often we have spent without regard for results, without judging success or failure

from year to year(Bush sends education package, 2001).

The principles President Bush referred to were: (1) accountability for results, (2) standards of excellence, (3) flexibility, and, (4) empowering parents with choices.

President Bush: These four principles are the guides to our education reform package. Yet today I'm offering more than principles; I'm sending a series of specific proposals to the United States Congress, my own blueprint for reform. I want to begin our discussion in detail with the Members of the House and the Senate because I know we need to act by this summer (Remarks on Submitting the Education Plan to Congress, 2001).

In order to translate the principles into programs, Bush proposed three aims to guide the effort: (1) flexibility in directing education and saving resources at the State level, (2) autonomy and local control in exchange for accountability at the local level, and, (3) information and options for parents. The Blueprint was broken down further into various components designed to advance his agenda for reform. These components, along with the principles for reform, represent the substance of Bush's plan and are discussed in the following paragraphs. It was noted by an informal advisor that the plan was "an outline rather than a bill. Bush's blueprint leaves specifics open to debate" (Gorman, 2001, p. 286).

The first of President Bush's four principles of education reform is accountability for results. Included within this section is an overview of accountability, along with how accountability is tied into the other principles of reform. It also describes how accountability is addressed at the level of the school building with the means of ensuring that schools take accountability seriously through either rewards for success or consequences for failure.

## Accountability for Results

The NCLB Act defines accountability as follows:

Each State plan shall demonstrate that the State has developed and is implementing a single, statewide State accountability system that will be effective in ensuring that all local educational agencies, public elementary schools, and public secondary schools make adequate yearly progress as defined under this paragraph. Each State accountability system shall be based on the academic standards and academic assessments and shall take into account the achievement of all public elementary school and secondary school students. (P.L. 107-110, Sec. 1111, 2002)

Sandy Kress, Bush's education advisor defined "real, robust accountability as high standards, annual testing and consequences, real consequences that flow from the measurement" (Gorman, 2001). He did not include the form the consequences must take. Through the Blueprint, Bush referred to the need for accountability because "an enterprise works best when those responsible are given the greatest latitude and support and when those responsible are held accountable for producing results" (Education Blueprint, 2001).

### *Presidential View:*

The President explained his position further, stating:

What happens here is there is a strong sense of accountability, which means there is a strong sense of the possible. Accountability is so important. And by accountability I mean testing children to determine whether or not children are learning. I believe it's the cornerstone of reform. I believe it's the essence of excellence in education, and I believe it's important to do so, to test every year, to make sure children are not left behind (Remarks at Merritt Extended Elementary School, 2001).



### *Congressional Response:*

The notion of accountability, as Senator Carper, below, states, creates a lot of confusion, mostly in terms of how it is to be applied to the issue of school reform.

Everyone agrees it is needed, regardless of the definition.

Carper attempts to define accountability for the Senate:

CARPER (D-DE): What is accountability? There is a lot of confusion about what is accountability. Accountability says there ought to be consequences—some positive and some maybe not so positive—for students who fall short of the mark or for those who do well or for those schools or districts that fall short or do well.  
(S4079)

Roemer believes that changes must be made in education:

ROEMER(D-IN): The core ideas revolve around three concepts: One is accountability; that we cannot continue to do things the same old way in this country and expect great vast new improvements from our teachers and our children and in their performances together. We must attach these requirements to new ideas and new accountability, and that means, yes, some standards and some tests. (H2397)

Frist adds the concept of freedom to the accountability term:

FRIST (R-TN): Accountability is a strange sort of word. What does it really mean? What it means is taking an individual student—it might be a classroom or it might be a school – and assessing whether or not that student is learning. That is all accountability is – to ensure that we provide freedom from regulations, which improves the return in school performance, in education, in the ability to learn, in being prepared for the world that we know students will soon be facing, matching freedom with results. You have to be able to demonstrate the results.  
(S4057)

Hutchison assumes that teachers are afraid of the testing requirements:

HUTCHISON (R-TX): But the schools that are failing are the schools that are afraid of accountability. There are teachers who do not want to have tests. Why don't they want to have tests? You can only assume they are concerned that they will not pass and that their students will not pass. That is not acceptable.  
(S4087)

Wellstone expresses the belief that accountability be paired with equity:

WELLSTONE (D-MN): No good teacher is afraid to be held accountable for what she does or what he does with children, but it is manifestly unfair to ask

accountability from teachers when the Congress is unwilling to be accountable for its behavior in shortchanging kids and basically cheating them from the hour of their birth, and then clubbing them over the head with a punitive exam. (S3386)

The principle of accountability is so closely associated with the principle of standards, that it appears someone in the early stages of crafting the legislation found the need to separate the term accountability from the broader term called "the accountability principle." The two concepts were delineated as such in the President's Blueprint.

#### The Accountability Principle

Accountability, flexibility, standards and testing are closely tied together and a description of one usually includes at least a partial description of one of the other principles. The accountability principle ties flexibility to accountability through standards, which includes test results.

#### *Presidential View:*

The President adds parent involvement to the accountability principle:

PRESIDENT BUSH: People talk about parental involvement. All of us are for parental involvement, of course. It will make the teachers' job so much easier when parents get involved. But there's nothing like parental involvement when we start posting scores on the Internet. There's nothing like parental involvement when we break down accountability on a child-per-child basis. There's nothing like getting a mother fired up when she sees the fact that her school may not be performing quite like she thought it was going to be. Accountability is not only good for the children; it's good for parents, as well (Remarks at Concord Middle School in Concord, North Carolina, 2001).

#### *Congressional Response:*

The following individuals weigh in with their views on the accountability principle:

Isakson understands accountability as focusing on the "neediest" students:

ISAKSON (R-GA): The results of the working group and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce is a bipartisan bill that ensures this country has

accountability in the expenditure of Title I funds, I might add for the first time. Since the inception of Title I, there has not been a mechanism for accountability of the progress of America's most disadvantaged students. (H2396)

Paul never pulls any punches when debating the issues:

PAUL (R-TX): Proponents of H.R.1 justify the mandatory testing by claiming it holds schools "accountable." Of course, everyone is in favor of holding schools accountable, but to whom? Under this bill, schools remain accountable to federal bureaucrats and those who develop the state tests upon which participating schools performance is judged. (H2418)

Hutchison thinks accountability will help find educational problems earlier:

HUTCHISON (R-TX): We are focusing on accountability. Yes, it will hurt in some ways. It will hurt if you fail. But wouldn't we rather have a failure early in a school career so we can correct it and give that child the real chance in life? Or do we want to continue social promotions with failing programs so the child never has the chance to reach his or her full potential? We want the child to succeed. To do that, we need accountability. We might need failure so we know what the problems are and we can bring them up to standard. (S4087)

The accountability principle is based on the notion that without consequences for failure, schools need to have pressure placed on them to insure success. These consequences, according to the Blueprint, will provide the inducement for success, which will then be rewarded by Federal funds to the States and local schools.

The rewards or consequences, also referred to as sanctions, for success or failure, are governed by a new procedure, only briefly referred to in the Blueprint, but is a major part of the overall accountability system described in the NCLB. Both individual schools and states are scrutinized. This new procedure aggregates and disaggregates test scores according to how the system chooses to use the scores as evidence and is the basis for determining "success" or "failure" of a school or school system. The aggregation of data, in this case scores on standardized tests, refers to the pooling or totaling of disparate or unrelated elements. This happens when a decision is made to pool test scores into a total or an average that would normally not be similar enough to

be put together. An example of this would be a school system combining the test scores of students in special education classes with the scores of students in advanced placement classes and claiming that they represent the average student scores in that school.

Disaggregation of scores or data involves dividing the scores into predetermined groups based on particular criteria. The NCLB has mandated that standardized test scores will be disaggregated into the following categories: race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, migrant status, English proficiency, and socio-economic status. Although disaggregated data will be included in reports to education agencies, the data is to be aggregated for the purposes of determining success or failure of a school. All groups must meet or exceed the state's predetermined level of proficient performance for the school to be deemed successful. If any one group fails to meet the performance standard, the entire school will be considered as failing.

In the following quote, President Bush talks to educators about disaggregation and its connection to testing and accountability:

PRESIDENT BUSH: When there's a problem diagnosed, help comes. That's what's so important about having accountability; it's the cornerstone for reform. I'm going to ask Congress to pass legislation that says that any school district which receives Federal money must design a test on an annual basis so that we know. It's the framework for addressing problems early, before it's too late. It says that consequences matter, but more importantly, if we set up the systems right, by disaggregating results, by treating each child as a person, not part of some overall group, we begin to have an education system that says each child matters, and we're going to track each child as he or she goes through the system. It's a critically important part of education reform (Remarks at Moline Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri, 2001).

The President's Blueprint for reform adds a new dimension to the federal package by specifying that there will be rewards for school that are successful, but also

consequences for schools that are not successful.

### Rewards for Success

Each state will be offered a one-time bonus if it meets accountability requirements. This includes establishing the new state-developed annual assessments within two years of the enactment of the NCLB, narrowing the achievement gap, and performing to high standards overall. The Blueprint does not give specifics on what percentage of schools in a state must meet these requirements for a state to receive the bonus, the amount of the bonus or who will pay for the bonus.

Individual schools will also be rewarded with a "No Child Left Behind" bonus if they are successful in improving the achievement of disadvantaged students - those eligible for Title I services. There are no provisions for schools who have no "disadvantaged" students but who may still improve overall. Each state will define adequate yearly progress (AYP) based on student assessments, applying performance standards to all students.

### *Congressional Response:*

Only one Congressman, a Republican Senator, offered an opinion on the issue of rewards for success.

Craig explains the goals for rewarding success:

CRAIG (R-WY): Improvement is now a must. It must be measured, and if you do improve, we will reward you. (S4377)

The word "failure" is used extensively throughout the President's Blueprint, in speeches made by the President, and in the Congressional deliberations of the reform package. Discussions of failure fall into one of two categories. The first subheading deals with failure of individual students or their families. The second subheading refers

to failure of educational systems to educate children as viewed by the President and Congress.

### Consequences for Failure

If a state fails to meet its performance objectives and demonstrate improvement in academic achievement, the Secretary of Education has the authority to reduce that state's federal funding for education. Schools that receive Title I funding that fail to make sufficient progress will receive "special", albeit unspecified, assistance. States must develop a definition of adequate yearly progress (AYP) to be applied specifically to the "disadvantaged" population, for the purposes of highlighting their performance and discerning whether the achievement gap is narrowing. Additionally, states must show improved scores by this population in three years or the Title I funds can be used by parents to transfer their child to an adequately performing school.

Below is a sampling of quotes referring to failure of students and/or families and opinions of how to deal with this or apply consequences.

#### *Presidential View:*

The President explains the notion of consequences for success and failure:  
PRESIDENT BUSH: And by the way, in order for there to be accountability that works, there must be a consequence for success, and a consequence for failure. There is no such thing as an accountability system unless something happens with success and failure. I believe we ought to reward success, and I believe, after a reasonable period of time, if a school will not teach and it will not change, something else must happen. And we're having a big debate on what the something else is in the Nation's Capital. There's a big debate on that. But one thing is for certain: I will not accept a plan that accepts failure, because our children are too important. One thing is for certain: People must be given different options if their children are in schools that simply won't adjust (Remarks at Concord Middle School in Concord, North Carolina, 2001).

#### *Congressional Response:*

In contrast to the one Senator who commented on rewards for success, the concept of having negative consequences for failure elicited many responses.

Isakson correlates a child's environment with failure to achieve in school:

ISAKSON(R-GA): For the benefit of this Chamber, it is important to understand that Title I students are America's poorest students, those on free and reduced lunch, those who most likely have come from an environment that is less than conducive to learning, and those, that after they enter the public school system, more often than other students, that will find themselves dropping out before they ever get a high school diploma. (H3296)

Osborne also equates environment with success:

OSBORNE (R-NE): A Harvard sociologist said in a statement, "When students come to class hungry, exhausted or afraid, when they bounce from school to school as their families face eviction, when they have no one at home to wake them up for the bus, much less look over their homework, not even the snazziest facilities, the strongest curriculum and the best paid teachers can ensure success." (H2402)

Mink points out that failure is a complicated issue:

MINK (D-HI): H.R.1 is written with the premise that if we test children enough, we'll know which students are failing and thus, which teachers and schools are failing. This legislation promotes the idea that if a child fails, the solution is to take away the teacher, or move the child to a different school. And it perpetuates this notion by providing some funds to some schools that fail, but does little to ensure the school has enough resources to succeed in the first place. (H2401)

Pryce relates the issue of poverty to low reading achievement:

PRYCE (R-OH): We know that 60% of children living in poverty are reading below the very basic level. We cannot expect these children to exceed (sic) with this handicap. At the same time, we destine these children to academic underachievement by our failure to teach them to read; we are denying them access to the world through books. (H2299)

Hutchison asserts that reading problems are the root of failure:

HUTCHISON (R-TX): Why not go down to the third grade and catch these young people who are having problems reading and give them a chance to have the full ability to absorb the education they are receiving? If we shuffle them from one grade to the next grade to the next grade, a social promotion, and they still can't read in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, who is surprised that the children are frustrated? They are sitting in classes, trying to learn algebra, math, science, history, and geography, and they don't have third grade reading skills. Of course, they are going to be



frustrated. (S4070)

Gregg addresses the regulations on achievement when a child goes to another school: GREGG (R-NH): When you [the parent] do that [use the *choice* option], the conditions are that your child has to learn. That is the only thing we are going to hold you to. Your child is going to have to start to achieve as a result of leaving that school and going to another school. Your child is going to have to start achieving at the level that they should have achieved to be comparable with or equal to a child in their grade level who is in a school that is performing well. Really, we are only talking about low-income parents; we are not talking about the general population.(S4071)

Reed believes that health care is an important aspect of educating children: REED (D-RI): There are still too many children who go to school without adequate health care, coming from homes that are dangerous because of exposure to lead in paint on the walls. There are still too many children who will fail because they don't have these types of supports and these types of help. (S4078)

Carper explains how Congress could best help children: Carper (D-DE): A lot of kids in life don't have the luxury of changing sides of the field. For a lot of their lives, they play the game running uphill. The role of the Federal Government, for kids who spend a whole lot of their lives running uphill, is to try to level that playing a field a little bit. For the kids born in tough situations, maybe with parents not engaged in their lives, or who don't value education, or maybe they don't even have parents, we must make sure those kids aren't hopelessly behind when they walk into kindergarten at age 5. If they are hopelessly behind and are coming from a real difficult situation in their home lives, they may need help to catch up with their other classmates. (S4080)

Collins says that money has been spent without affecting the achievement gap: COLLINS (R-ME): After spending \$125 billion of Title I funding for disadvantaged students over 25 years, there is little to suggest that we are making progress in narrowing the achievement gap. Fewer than a third of fourth-graders can read at grade level. If you look more closely at test scores, over time, you will notice the better students improving their performance while the worse students are getting worse. You also see a persistent achievement gap between students from disadvantaged families and their more affluent peers. (S4088)

The term "failure" is used throughout the deliberations both as a way to focus blame on children, parents and teachers and also as a means through which an



educational crisis may be highlighted. The following subheading separates failure of individuals from failures within systems of education.

### Systemic Educational Failures

There is no agreement on the extent of failure in the schools or even who is responsible, if one believes that failure exists. It is one of the cornerstone issues in this reform effort, however, as it pervades all aspects of the debating of this bill. It is not a partisan issue, and it is used by many at the federal level as a rallying cry for reform.

#### *Presidential View:*

PRESIDENT BUSH: American children must not be left in persistently dangerous or failing schools. When schools do not teach and will not change, parents and students must have other meaningful options. Parents and children who have only bad options must eventually get good options if we're to succeed all across the country (Remarks on Submitting the Education Plan to Congress, 2001).

#### *Congressional Response:*

The following quotes illustrate the wide-ranging views on the failure within the systems of education and are drawn from Republicans and Democrats in both the House and Senate.

Hutchison equates the lack of standards with failure in the schools:

HUTCHISON (R-TX): Our public education system is failing. It is failing because there is such a variation of standards. Some of our public schools are terrific, but they are not all terrific. Some are even abysmal. (S4070)

Gregg outlines the federal plan for dealing with failure:

GREGG (R-NH): Under this bill, what we say is if a school fails in the first year, we are going to come in with some additional resources to that school and we are going to try to help that school improve. If by the third year, the school is still failing, we are going to say to the parent: All right, you have the right to do something with your children to try to improve their education because it is very obvious that you are not getting the benefit you need as a result of the way the school is functioning. (S4071)

Frist demonstrates the difficulty of explaining the federal plan for failure:

FRIST (R-TN): If that school fails one year and you have a child in that school – remember that child's face– and that school fails a second year–remember that child's face; they are trapped in that school; and think about it being your child - if they are trapped in that school for a third year of failure; meaning in academic performance, achievement, and ability to learn, but also safety issues – a school that might be unsafe in spite of doing everything you can in terms of establishing safeguards and investing in that school – and if your child is trapped in that unsafe school a fourth year, and they have not learned over those 4 years – the school itself is failing though you put more resources into it – then there needs to be repercussions. This is the American way of doing things. (S4057)

Dewine bemoans failure in the schools:

DEWINE (R-OH): Failure to properly educate our children puts them at risk. (S4021)

Dorgan affirms his belief in the education systems:

DORGAN (D-ND): When hearing this debate, one wonders what has allowed this country to be as successful as it has been? This is the country, after all, that has split the atom and spliced genes. We have invented radar and the silicon chip. We have invented plastics. We learned to fly, and then we built airplanes. We flew those airplanes, and then we built rockets. We took those rockets to the Moon and walked on its surface. We cured smallpox and polio. We discovered how to create a telephone and then used it, invented radios, television, computers. One almost wonders how on Earth this happened in a country like this with an education system that some say has totally failed us. The reason all of this happened is the education system has not failed this country at all. There are some significant challenges and some significant problems in certain areas of our education system, but by and large this education system has been the most productive in the world for a long period of time. (S3822)

Keller wants a safety valve for some children's educational needs:

KELLER (R-FL): For the first time, more children are going to be able to read in this country. Parents are going to get a report card as to how their children's school is performing, and children now trapped in a failing school will have a safety valve to get out. It is important to realize that public school choice provides a nice safety valve for children trapped in these public schools. It gets them immediate relief. (H2401)

Kyl addresses the issue of resources vs reform:

KYL (R-AZ): We should stop making excuses for failure and begin retiring the most tired excuse of all, which is that a lack of resources explains why our public school system is failing so many of our children - a lack of resources, of course, in the form of taxpayer dollars for education programs. The education special

interests may come up short in educating the children who most desperately need the help, but they are experts at excuses. We need to ask the parents of children in failing schools. Would you rather the Government appropriate funds to fully fund your failing school or would you rather be given the freedom to enroll your child in one of these no excuses schools? (S4391)

Education has long been considered the domain of the state and local education agencies. Since the 1960's, and the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal government has slowly but surely provided increasing amounts of funding to the states while adding federal guidelines for states to follow if they want to receive additional funding. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act attached substantially more federal requirements than ever before, especially in the standards and accountability domains. The debate over whether this federal oversight is a good or not-so-good requirement will likely continue for many years.

#### Federal Responsibility in the Reform Effort

In the following paragraphs, Senators and Representatives debate the issue of the federal government's responsibility in both the reform effort and in education, generally, and whether or not it has increased, with the provisions of this bill.

Carper discusses the new federal role in education:

CARPER (D-DE): We are in the throes of redefining the Federal role in education in this country. Part of that legislation says to States: We expect you to narrow the achievement gap for all your students over the next 10 years. We expect your students to perform at higher marks, making progress along the achievement path toward being able to read well and doing math well. (S4563)

Reed expects Congress to share the blame for problems in education:

REED (D-RI): One of the presumptions of this debate, for those who are suggesting that we engage in a regime of testing without adequate resources – one of the presumptions is the sense that our schools are failing America. There is another perspective. The perspective is that this Congress, and preceding Congresses, State Governors, and State assemblies have for years and years been failing our schools. We have not been giving them the resources they need.

We have not been recognizing that educational problems today, in many cases, result from problems of health care for children, problems of poverty for children, problems of housing for children. Until we recognize these issues and until we confront these issues, not just rhetorically but, more importantly, with real resources and a real commitment to say that our schools are failing, America is missing a much larger point. (S4079)

Carper insists the federal government can be helpful:

CARPER (D-DE): My boys play soccer on a field that is not level. Half the game they are running uphill, then they switch sides and play the second half running downhill. A lot of kids don't have the luxury of changing sides of the field. For a lot of their lives, they are running uphill. The role of the Federal Government, for the kids who are running uphill, is to try to level that playing field a little bit. For the kids born in tough situations, maybe with parents not engaged in their lives, or who don't value education, or maybe they don't have parents, we must make sure those kids aren't hopelessly behind when they walk into kindergarten at age 5. (S4080)

Keller does not see the new requirements as increasing federal involvement:

KELLER (R-FL): [A] criticism is that the Federal Government should not be involved in testing. H.R.1 explicitly prohibits federally sponsored national tests, prohibits federally controlled curricula criteria, as well as any mandatory national teacher test or certification. (H2401)

Castle explains why he believes that federal intervention is a good thing:

CASTLE (R-DE): Prior to 1965, many poor and minority students were denied access to a quality education. In effect, this country had a two-tiered educational system, one with low expectations for poor and minority students and high expectations for others. Then Washington got involved. Now after 35 years and more than \$130 billion of well-intentioned spending, we have yet to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. We have allowed ourselves to believe that some children are simply beyond our reach. As a result, this Nation has suffered. H.R.1 focuses on what should be taught and what should be learned at the State and local levels. (H2406)

McCollum wants to ensure local control remains intact:

MCCOLLUM (D-MN): Mr. Chairman, I want to support a bill that involves parent and community control at a local level, but I will not support a bill if it takes decisions away from parents and local school districts and creates a new block grant program. I want to support a bill that holds schools accountable for the success of our children's education. We have more work to do on this bill. When our school districts, teachers, parents, and students look at this bill, will we have passed their test? (H2402)

Rivers is opposed to increased federal intervention:

RIVERS (D-MI): Mr. Chairman, I arise in opposition to H.R.1. Less bad is not good. It is not legitimate to argue for passage of a flawed proposal on the basis that it could be worse. What we have before us is a huge federal intrusion into the jurisdiction of State legislators and local school boards. What we have is a poll-driven illusion of reform through standardized testing, vehicle that has come under recent scrutiny. This is a power grab by the federal government, pure and simple. It represents an attempt to leverage only 7 percent of the funding for American schools into control of the entire K-12 system. Such action flies in the face of our long-standing tradition of local control of education. We should not encourage the public to turn their eyes to Washington regarding educational matters.

But even if this power grab succeeds, Congress cannot deliver on the promises this bill makes. Testing is not the panacea its advocates claim. This bill is a mirage. It is not what it seems to be, and it makes a terrible trade. It stands a two-century tradition of community-controlled schools on its head in exchange for the mere illusion of reform. Vote "no." (H2404)

Paul believes federal expansion into education goes against the Constitution:

PAUL (R-TX): Under the United States Constitution, the federal government has no authority to hold states "accountable" for their education performance. In the free society envisioned by the founders, school are held accountable to parents, not federal bureaucrats. However, the current system of imposing oppressive taxes on America's families and using those taxes to fund federal education programs denies parental control of education by denying them control over their education dollars.

If, after the experience of the past 30 years, you believe that federal bureaucrats are better able to meet children's unique educational needs than parents and communities, then vote for H.R.1. However, if you believe that the failures of the past shows expanded federal educational control over the classroom is a recipe for leaving every child behind, then do not settle for limited state flexibility in the context of a massive expansion of federal power: Reject H.R.1 and instead help put educational resources back into the hands of parents. (H2418)

The second of President Bush's principles of education reform addresses standards of excellence. The Blueprint describes the means for achieving this goal through measurement and testing programs in every state and by improving teacher quality at all levels.

## Standards of Excellence

The states are required to establish content standards for their curriculum, not only in reading and math, but also in history and science. Every student is to achieve the standards set forth by the state, and each standard is to be deemed challenging. Standards are determined by a committee of appointed experts in the field using a professional consensus model, however, there is no explicit requirement that the tests be aligned with the standards. The local school is ultimately responsible for ensuring students meet the established standards despite not having a voice in either determining the standard or the test to measure it.

### *Presidential View:*

President Bush compares a principal of a school to the CEO of an organization and puts the onus for achievement in the principal's lap.

President Bush: Those of us who have been involved with public education know this irrefutable fact, that the quality of a school depends on the quality of a principal. That when you find a good principal, the CEO of a school, you'll find a school that achieves what we all want: every child learning.

And there are some basic principles involved. One is to have leadership, not only at the district level but at the school level, set the highest of high standards. Leaders that understand that every child can learn and refuse to accept excuses when they don't. Dr. Shannon believes that way. She asked a question, "Why aren't our children achieving?" And when they begin to achieve, she raises the bar. That's what a leader does" (Remarks at Merritt Extended Elementary School, 2001).

In contrast to the above quote, in the following, President Bush appears to put the responsibility for success on a deficiency that he believes can be easily corrected. Unlike in the business world where deficiencies are in products that are manufactured, in education, the "product" is a child.

PRESIDENT BUSH: We're here to applaud a school and a district that has got a

vision, a vision of high standards and strong measurement systems; a school that not only measures, but when it finds deficiency, corrects; a school that recognizes an accountability will work when you view each child as a child, not as some group--part of a group. Accountability systems says every child matters, and when we find a child deficient, we're going to correct (Remarks at Merritt Extended Elementary School, 2001).

Standards-based reform also does not take into account that both innate ability and test scores fall along a distribution of scores, meaning that someone will be at the top and someone at the bottom of this range of scores. Legislation cannot change the fact that not every child can be as successful as some of the others.

*Congressional Response:*

The following quotes from the Senate, illustrate the difficulty in debating standards.

Carper offers his definition of academic standards:

CARPER (D-DE): What is an academic standard? It spells out in a state such as Delaware, or any other state, what we can expect students to know and be able to do, such as standards in math, science, English, social studies, and in other subjects as well. (S4079)

Reed questions the latest changes to standards requirements:

REED (D-RI): What will be the standards? Who sets the standards? It is clear that there will be increasing testing. This testing raises significant questions. Most of the states, if not all of the states, engage in rather elaborate testing already. The 1994 ESEA reauthorization embarked on a very elaborate process of setting state standards. What a child should know, developing evaluations so those standards are tested, and imposing a scheme of evaluations--not every year for every child, but a scheme that made sense to a particular state. Now we are saying, no, one size does fit all for every child, every year, for grades 3 through 8. (S4078)

Kyl faults the old way of doing things:

KYL (R-AZ): The bill will also include some long-sought-after reforms on accountability and standards so the children are not just warehoused and pushed from grade to grade without ever having met the educational requirements. That has gone on. We all know about it. Everyone knows about it at the local and State levels. (S4392)



Hutchison equates standards with achievement:

HUTCHISON (R-TX): We are trying to reform the system so there will be a standard under which any child in this country who is educated in our public schools will be a child who can reach his or her full potential so that no child will be left behind. We are trying to set a minimum standard that every child must meet or if the child doesn't, that we will give that child help. We are trying to set a standard by which every child in this country will be able to read at grade level in the third grade. (S4070)

Dorgan stresses the need for school report cards:

DORGAN (S-ND): President Bush is correct when he talks about the need for testing. People also need to know what our schools are producing, how our schools are doing. There are no standards for school report cards and no parent can understand how their school is doing. They know how their child is doing because they get a report card every 6 to 9 weeks. But how is their school doing? Is this school doing a good job of education that child? How does this school relate or compare to another school? How does our State compare to another State? What are we getting as taxpayers for the investments we are making in these schools? We have a right to know that. (S3823)

The key element in standards is annual testing. This area of debate covers who will be tested and who is ultimately responsible, but not what is to be tested.

### Annual Testing

The Blueprint puts a considerable emphasis on testing, which is an outcome-based system as opposed to an input-based system of education that would rely more heavily on the process of learning (Fusarelli, 2004). It appears to be the most important aspect of the Bush Administration's reform effort and is the cornerstone of the four principles and their related components. The individual states have testing and reporting programs and some schools are tested through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The change as outlined in the Blueprint is to require states to develop new, additional tests that are tied into the newly mandated state-developed standards.

### *Presidential View:*

The President believes testing schedules be adhered to by all systems:



PRESIDENT BUSH: Children must be tested every year in reading and math-- every single year. Not just in the third grade or the eighth grade, but in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh and eighth grade (Remarks on Submitting the Education Plan to Congress, 2001).

Testing students annually and then using the scores to highlight areas of progress or failure is the first step in this new accountability system. Accountability cannot be attained, however, unless all students - regardless of innate ability, English language proficiency, or other factors affecting achievement - meet the standards of proficiency set forth by each state in the subject areas tested. The NCLB does not set a national standard for all states to follow, therefore, the individual states are likely to have different standards, different tests, and different means through which accountability goals are met.

*Presidential View:*

In the following quote, the President emphasizes the need for testing:

President Bush: I worry about a system that doesn't test, because I ask the question, like Dr. Shannon asks the question, "How do you know if you don't?" I worry about a system that periodically tests, because one year you may test, and everything is fine. In 4 years, you measure again, and all of a sudden something isn't fine, and you've missed 4 years of opportunity to make sure a child doesn't slip behind. Accountability is important for students. It's important for--and I know students don't like to take tests, and I'm confident the parents here heard the same thing Laura and I heard when our daughters went to Austin High School, "We're sick of tests." And my answer was, "Well, I'm sorry you're sick of it, but we want to know" (Remarks at Merritt Extended Elementary School, 2001).

Schools have always tested the progress of their students through a variety of measures. They have always reported the results to parents though the extent of the reporting varies greatly by state and local educational authorities. What makes the new requirement unique is the policy mandating how the scores are to be aggregated or

disaggregated which becomes a report on the school, instead of only the individual student's progress.

*Congressional Response:*

Testing is a hot-button topic for both the President and Congress. It's importance to all who are engaged in this reform process is evidenced both by the multiplicity of responses to this particular topic and the range of deliberations of this particular provision of the NCLB.

Wellstone worries about the impact of reforms on poor children:

WELLSTONE (D-MN): The White House will test the poor against the rich and then announce that the poor are failing. Federally required tests without federally required equity amounts to clubbing these children over the head after systematically cheating them. That is exactly what we are doing. We know in advance which kids will fail. So this is a plan not for reform, not for equality, but for guaranteed humiliation of children. (S4076)

Reed reminds us that testing is just the first step in reform:

REED (D-RI): It has been estimated by the National Association of State Boards of Education that testing every child in grades 3 through 8 could cost between \$2.7 and \$7 billion over 4 years. That type of money is not in the appropriations language I am seeing in the President's budget. That type of commitment is certainly not there. And that is just for testing alone. That is just to diagnose the problem. But we all recognize that simply identifying children who are falling behind and schools that are falling behind is just the first step, the hardest step is fixing the problem. (S4078)

Mink believes that too much testing is harmful:

MINK (D-HI): The annual tests contained in this bill will not be a vehicle for success, but rather a harbinger of punishment for children, teachers, principals, and schools. In the end, it will be communities that suffer from the misplaced emphasis on these tests. (H2401)

Paul looks down the road to the next wave of reforms:

PAUL (R-TX): National testing will inevitably lead to a national curriculum as teachers will teach what their students need to know in order to pass their mandated "assessment." After all, federal funding depends on how students perform on these tests. Proponents of this approach dismiss these concerns by saying "there is only one way to read and do math." Then what are the battles

about phonics versus whole language or new math versus old math about? There are continuing disputes about teaching all subjects as well as how to measure mastery of a subject matter. Once federal mandatory testing is in place however, those arguments will be settled by the beliefs of whatever regime currently holds sway in DC. I would like my colleagues to consider how comfortable they would feel supporting this bill if they knew that in five years proponents of fuzzy math and whole language could be writing the NAEP? (H2418)

Sessions sees nothing wrong with teaching the test:

SESSIONS (R-AL): Some say, I just don't like these tests mandated by the Federal Government. They direct policy in teaching and teachers have to teach to the test. But if the test is a good test, and the test determines whether or not a child can handle basic math or can read and write, and teachers are teaching to that test, I say, well done. I say that is progress. (S4073)

Hutchison suggests using tests as the standard for instruction:

HUTCHISON (R-TX): A lot of people wring their hands and talk about tests: We don't want tests; we don't want too many artificial tests; we don't want teachers teaching to the tests. If we are testing for the basic skills, why wouldn't we teach to the test and improve what the children are learning? If we teach to the test and the test is fundamental reading, fundamental math, fundamental science, fundamental history, then we need to have a standard by which to judge what is happening in our schools.(S4087)

Wellstone questions the need for additional testing:

WELLSTONE (D-MN): I have never met a teacher and I have never met a parent who has said to me what we need is more and more tests, tests, tests. (S3822)

Kennedy articulates his notion of reform:

KENNEDY (D-MA): Testing and accountability are important, but they are only the measures of reform, they are not the reform themselves. (S3818)

Murray fears for the children who will not pass the tests:

MURRAY (D-WA): Just giving tests as required in the bill does not assure the students will do better. I fear it means without the backing of resources behind it, so the children can learn what is required of them to pass the test, the children will fail and drop out of school. And yes, 5 years from now we may have a higher percentage of kids doing better on tests but nobody will be testing the kids who didn't make it, who dropped out, who failed, who are not in the school system anymore. Those are the kids we cannot leave behind. (S3823)

## National Testing Programs

The following group of quotes reflect the debates regarding responsibility for the testing program as a whole.

Roukema reminds states that they will be accountable for results:

ROUKEMA (R-NJ): It is important to emphasize that the States will develop their own standards and assessment. This bill does not dictate a national test. However, what the bill does say, if you are going to accept Federal education funding, then you are going to be held accountable for the results. State test results will be confirmed through the National Assessment of Educational Progress or a similar test. (H2399)

Keller articulates the federal vs. the state's role in testing:

KELLER (R-FL) : H.R.1 explicitly prohibits federally sponsored national tests, prohibits federally controlled curricula criteria, as well as any mandatory national teacher test or certification. (H2401)

Paul is afraid state's rights are being violated:

PAUL (R-TX): My biggest concern is with the new mandate that states test children and compare the test with a nationally normed test such as the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). While proponents of this approach claim that the bill respects state autonomy as states can draw up their own tests, these claims fail under close observation. First of all, the very act of imposing a national testing mandate on states is a violation of states' and local communities' authority, protected by the 10th amendment to the United States Constitution, to control education free from federal interference.

Some will claim that this does not violate states' control because states are free to not accept federal funds. However, every member here knows that it is the rare state administrator who will decline federal funds to avoid compliance with federal mandates. It is time Congress stopped trying to circumvent the constitutional limitations on its authority by using the peoples' own money to bribe them into complying with unconstitutional federal dictates. (H2417)

Enzi emphasizes the provisions for state testing:

ENZI (R-WY): The bill clarifies the purpose of the President's requirement that States expand existing assessments and take on the new practice of participating annually in the NAEP test. These clarifications go a long way in addressing the fundamental concerns by all parties that the Federal Government not enact additional unfunded mandates and that the States continue to retain the flexibility to design their own standards of learning for students versus national standards or tests.(S4082)

## Achievement

The question of whether resources matter or not in order for schools to be successful is covered in the following quotes. The answers are divided along party lines.

Wellstone interprets the effects of poverty on the ability to achieve:

WELLSTONE (D-MN): If you go down in the trenches, a lot of the inner-city neighborhoods and rural areas, you have kids on free or reduced lunch programs. You have homes where sometimes they have to move two or three times a year. You have schools that are crumbling, schools that don't have the resources, schools that don't have the laboratory facilities and schools that don't have the textbooks. Now what you are saying is you are going to have tests and state with precision the obvious: Guess what. Children who come to school hungry, children who come from families who don't have adequate housing or are even homeless, children who are not kindergarten ready, children who do not receive all of the good stimulation and all of the nurturing that they need to have before kindergarten, those children who come to schools without the facilities, without the best teachers, without the salaries for the teachers, we are going to find out through tests that those children and those schools aren't doing as well as a lot of other schools which have all the resources in the world with which to work. That is what the test does. Absolutely nothing—not without the resources. (S3822)

Clinton reports on some positive outcomes in high poverty schools:

CLINTON (D-NY): We often only focus on the negative side of the ledger about how much we still have to do. I give some credit to the children and the young people our students and their parents, and especially the teachers, because we have seen progress. Reading and math scores for fourth graders in our highest poverty school districts have improved by nearly a grade level from 1994 to today. (S3819)

Clinton also provides facts about Title I effectiveness:

I want to be sure the American people have the facts about Title I. In fiscal year 2001, Congress provided school districts with only one-third of the resources needed to fully serve eligible students in order to help close the achievement gap. Even with this limited Federal investment, our schools districts have shown real gains in reading and math. In 1999, fourth and eighth graders in urban schools boosted their performance in reading and math. In fact, 87.5 percent of the urban school districts showed reading gains in Title I schools and 83 percent showed math gains. There are those who still deny these facts and make the claim that Title I doesn't make a difference. I often think Washington is the only evidence-free zone in our country. The facts are the facts. Title I does make a difference. (S4086)

Collins insists that Title I is not working:

COLLINS (R-ME): After spending \$125 billion of Title I funding for disadvantaged students over 25 years, there is little to suggest that we are making progress in narrowing the achievement gap. Fewer than a third of fourth graders can read at grade level. If you look more closely at test scores, over time, you will notice the better students improving their performance while the worse students are getting worse. (S4088)

The final section of debates under standards refers to teacher quality and how it can be improved.

### Improving Teacher Quality

The Administration's proposal for preparing, training and recruiting teachers is based upon the principle that teacher excellence is vital to achieving improvement in student achievement (Education Blueprint, Title II, 2001). The proposals in the teacher quality section address several concerns of this administration. A "High-Quality" teaching force will be put in place through the establishment of "High Standards for Professional Development." Alternative certification programs, tenure reforms, merit-based teacher performance systems are just a few of the innovations mentioned. The Class Size Reduction program was one of several federal programs deemed to have "failed to deliver" and will be replaced by more "flexible" teacher quality grants to state and local school districts.

Teachers will be accountable to parents and states will be accountable to the federal government for ensuring teacher quality improves. Parents will have the option to request information on individual teachers regarding their effectiveness of quality of instruction. States will be required to define the parameters for the terms effectiveness and quality of instruction. There will be no national definition of teacher quality since each state will write its own guidelines. This implies that the concept of accountability is

different from state to state so that a "high-quality" teacher in one state could be judged to be "low-quality" in the neighboring state.

*Presidential View:*

President Bush describes his vision of a "good teacher."

PRESIDENT BUSH: There's nothing better than combining the love of a teacher with the talent and tools necessary to be able to make sure children learn. But it also means convincing teachers of the importance and power of accountability. A good teacher welcomes accountability, because a good teacher understands that measurement is the kernel for success. A good teacher will be able to see in real stark terms the fruits of his or her labor. A good teacher is somebody who says, "Give me a chance to succeed, and I can prove I can succeed" (Remarks at Merritt Extended Elementary School, 2001).

The President discusses how to retrain teachers:

PRESIDENT BUSH: There will be money involved in the reading program to help retrain teachers on how to teach a curriculum that works. One of the things that we must recognize in our society, Governor, is that sometimes our teacher colleges do not--are not able to match the hearts of teachers and give them the skills necessary to be effective teachers. There needs to be a lot of retraining, unfortunately. And until the teacher colleges get it right in terms of teaching curriculum that works, it seems like to me, a useful role for Government is to provide funds for teacher retraining. I'm not saying all teacher colleges fail. You would probably argue with me here that Missouri teacher colleges don't fail. But sometimes you find teachers in classrooms who have got all heart but lack the skills necessary to understand the science of reading. And it is incumbent upon us to match the heart and skills together (Remarks at Moline Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri, 2001).

*Congressional Response:*

There is no consensus in Congress on the quality of teachers in this country or on whether resources affect teacher quality.

Kennedy asserts that more money can help education:

KENNEDY (D-MA): Across America, 12 million children live in poverty--but we provide the full range of Title I Federal education services to only one in three of these children. The rest are left to fend for themselves with the most inadequate teaching, the most inadequate attention, and the most inadequate facilities. Four of every 10 children in poverty are taught by teachers who lack an

undergraduate major or minor degree in their primary field. Because federal Title I funding is so deficient, needy children have more teachers' aides than teachers. In all these cases our Republican colleagues say that "money doesn't guarantee a quality education." What a preposterous response. Money may not guarantee quality education, but it is impossible to provide quality education in today's schools without substantial new investments. (S4557)

Hutchison thinks some teachers are afraid of testing:

HUTCHISON: There are some public schools that are terrific. Those are the schools where the parents and teachers and principals work together, where there is an openness, where the principal welcomes the parents to be a part of the process. But the schools that are failing are the schools that are afraid of accountability. There are teachers who do not want to have tests. Why don't they want to have tests? You can only assume they are concerned that they will not pass and that their students will not pass. That is not acceptable. (S4087)

Mink relates how the lack of resources affects children:

MINK (D-HI): ESEA was passed in 1965 to help America's most disadvantaged children. These are our poorest children, who go to school in crumbling buildings, with outdated textbooks, few if any computers, little access to challenging, up-to-date curriculum, and a teaching force that is often overburdened, inexperienced, underpaid, and undertrained. (H2400)

Wellstone wants more money going to teacher training programs:

WELLSTONE (D-MN): [This is] a transition teaching amendment that I have been working on which will be a bipartisan effort which expands and enhances the current transition program to ensure that funds are targeted to the high-poverty and high-need school districts. The program will ensure funds are used on activities that have proven effective in both recruiting and retaining teachers. This is critical because so much of the need for teachers is rooted in the high attrition rate in the field. 73% of teachers in Minnesota leave the field for reasons other than retirement. (S4077)

The third principle of education reform is flexibility, a somewhat nebulous concept to understand, and therefore, most difficult to enforce of the four principles. While it implies a freedom to develop programs according to community-level needs and requirements, it actually applies to funding and resources for program initiatives. Flexibility gives state and local agencies a choice of what programs they wish to fund or



not, within specific guidelines.

### Flexibility

The Blueprint defines flexibility as freedom from regulation. One of the priorities described in the Executive Summary of the Blueprint is as follows:

Reduce Bureaucracy and Increase Flexibility: Additional flexibility will be provided to states and school districts, and flexible funding will be increased at the local level (Education Blueprint, Executive Summary, 2001).

The Presidential intention for States is: Flexibility in directing education and saving resources, in exchange for accountability through measurable results (Bush sends education package, 2001). This same news release refers again to flexibility, stating:

To increase standards of excellence for all students, the president proposes a bold and ambitious Federal approach to education, granting States and local schools unprecedented freedom from federal regulation - in exchange for accountability for results (Bush sends education package 2001).

As noted in the above section on teacher quality, the flexibility option is used to abolish the Class Size Reduction program for "failing to deliver" so that those funds can be used elsewhere.

### *Presidential View:*

In the following, the President uses the term "flexibility" in the first quote in a context different from its application in the Blueprint. There, it applies to a division of resources. This is how President Bush uses the term in the second and third quotes.

PRESIDENT BUSH: The agents of reform must be schools and school districts, not bureaucracies. Teachers and principals, local and State leaders must have the responsibility to succeed and the flexibility to innovate. One size does not fit all when it comes to educating the children in America. School districts, school officials, educational entrepreneurs should not be hindered by excessive rules and red tape and regulation (Remarks on Submitting the Education Plan to

Congress, 2001).

PRESIDENT BUSH: The principle here is a basic one. If local schools do not have the freedom to change, they cannot be held accountable for failing to change. Authority and accountability must be aligned at the local level, or schools will have a convenient excuse for failure: "I would have done it this way but some central office or Washington, DC, caused me to do it another way" (Remarks on Submitting the Education Plan to Congress, 2001).

PRESIDENT BUSH: It is the job of the local folks to chart the path for excellence for every single child in America, and we trust them to do so. As a result of this bill, local officials now have unprecedented flexibility to decide where to spend money and target reforms. In return, we expect States to set standards of basic knowledge and to make steady progress toward meeting those standards. Every student in grades three through eight will be tested in reading and math (Remarks on Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

The principle of flexibility does not impact early childhood education as a separate entity but, as covered in a later section, the President does offer a proposal to Congress to move the Head Start Program into the Department of Education. With this move, he could then require states to take responsibility for both procuring the funding, through federal block grants, and for the daily responsibilities of running the programs in the individual states.

This is not a popular initiative with officials in the states or with those involved in the Head Start program as it exists currently. At a time when many of the states are facing budget crises, additional requirements for funding Head Start or other education initiatives are problematic (Neuman, 2003; Sunderman, 2003). Giving states "management flexibility" (Goldstein & Strauss, 2003) over the Head Start program has been criticized for fear that if governors are forced to put Head Start into their state budgets, the money allotted through block grants could be used for other purposes. (Goldstein & Strauss, 2003). Zigler and Styfco worried that if states had to merge Head

Start into their budgets for preschool programs, their individual centers would suffer from uneven quality (2004).

*Congressional Response:*

Flexibility is interpreted in many different ways by those in Congress and the following quotes illustrate the difficulty in understanding the nuances of this principle.

Isakson applauds the new flexibility provisions:

ISAKSON (R-GA): This program focuses on flexibility. Historically, for years, flexibility has been something local systems have not had. As this debate goes on, we will learn local systems will now have up to 50 percent of their own flexibility, flexibility at their own volition. (H2396)

Hoekstra laments lack of flexibility in the new provisions:

HOEKSTRA (R-MI): Regrettably, today I come to the floor today to voice my opposition to H.R.1. The flexibility for states has been eliminated. The parental empowerment has been weakened. The results accountability has been added to the bill, but the red tape where local school districts and states have to report back to Washington on how they spend their money has been maintained. We are now going to tell states and local school districts how they spend their money as well as the results they are going to get. What we are left with is Goals 2001, after we fought Goals 2000; and accountability putting us on the road to national testing and spending that only President Clinton could have dreamed of. (H2399)

Reed wonders if the flexibility provisions are going to work:

REED (D-RI): In these ongoing discussions, there is also included the notion of supplemental services, the idea that in failing schools there will be money given for supplemental services. It seems to me that raises a very profound question: are you interested in merely giving a few children this option, because given the caps on this program, all children, even in the failing schools, may not be able to realize this program? Or are you interested in fixing the schools so that not only that class of children but succeeding classes of children will enjoy excellent education in a reformed, revitalized school? It seems to me we are diverting resources from the main point, to fix our schools, giving some children access to some supplemental education alternatives. That is another issue. (S4078)

Kennedy wants flexibility tied to providing for the neediest students:

KENNEDY (D-MA): We are still working on how to increase the flexibility while maintaining targeting and accountability. It is important that any additional flexibility is tied to strong accountability, and strong targeting to the neediest

communities. (S3818)

Ballenger affirms the new flexibility provisions:

BALLENGER (R-NC): This legislation puts the decision-making in the hands of local teachers and parents, not Washington bureaucrats. (H2398)

Paul tells is like it is:

PAUL (R-TX): Only in a town where a decrease in the rate of spending increases is considered a cut, could a bill laden with federal mandates be considered an increase in local control. (H2317)

The fourth and last principle of education reform addresses the need to have parents involved in their child's' education program along with the steps states must take in order facilitate this process.

#### Empowering Parents with Choices

The Blueprint outlines how the Bush administration plans to empower parents by giving them the means to check on a school's accountability because, they stress, no parent, when given the option, would willingly keep her child in an under-performing school. In order to arm parents with information, schools will be required to publish report cards on their yearly progress on standardized tests and make the information available via the internet (A Blueprint for New Beginnings, 2001).

In addition to having the ability to gauge a school's progress, Bush wanted to give parents the choice of sending their children to another school if their home school was "failing". Failure is described in the Blueprint as a lack of adequate yearly progress toward narrowing the achievement gap, however, nowhere in the Blueprint is the achievement gap defined in measurable terms. It is reported to be the difference between the academic progress of rich and poor children or between Title I and non-Title I students.

For a parent to utilize the choice option, the child's school must be deemed as failing for three consecutive years and the child must be labeled as being disadvantaged. Under Bush's plan, the choice option allows parents to transfer their child to an adequately performing school or use their share of Title I funds to enroll their child in a private school, with the understanding that the parent would make up any difference between the funds provided by Title I and the actual costs of the private school chosen.

*Presidential View:*

The president discusses why he believes parents need to be better informed: PRESIDENT BUSH: It's important for parents. There's a lot of discussion about parental involvement. Senator Kennedy asked a very good question--how is parental involvement? I thought the principal gave a very good answer. But there's no better way to encourage parental involvement than to diagnose, on a child-by-child basis, where a child stands. There's no better way to get a parent's attention than for a principal to send the word, "Well, we're having a little trouble with your child. We want your child to succeed." The worst thing that can happen from a parent's perspective is there be no information. The worst thing that can happen is that the parents think everything is fine: "always "Well, my child may have passed a test in the third grade, but there's been no measurement in the fourth, fifth, or sixth, so I will just assume as a parent that everything is fine, and then wake up and realize things aren't fine." To me, that's a shame when and if our systems do that to parents (Remarks at Merritt Extended Elementary School, 2001).

Another option for parents is an encouragement to save for their child's college costs through a tax-exempt exemption on prepaid tuition savings plans and raising the cap on yearly tuition savings accounts. This is the only empowering option available to parents whose children are not labeled disadvantaged. Middle-class parents do not have the option of sending their child to a different school if their home school is found to be failing (Education Blueprint, 2001).

Parental empowerment initiatives will not be a new experience for parents whose children attended a Head Start program before kindergarten. Head Start has always sought to empower parents through participation and information. Parent's involvement in their child's education is especially important in the early years when children are forming the education habits they will keep throughout their school years. The involved parent is more likely to have a partnership with the classroom teacher and can work together in the best interest of the child to identify emerging problems and discover solutions that all parties are comfortable with applying.

*Congressional Response:*

Gregg outlines the conditions for the choice options:

GREGG (R-NH): When you [the parent] do that [use the *choice* option], the conditions are that your child has to learn. That is the only thing we are going to hold you to. Your child is going to have to start to achieve as a result of leaving that school and going to another school. Your child is going to have to start achieving at the level that they should have achieved to be comparable with or equal to a child in their grade level who is in a school that is performing well. (S4071)

Hutchison wants parents to be informed:

HUTCHISON (R-TX): Another reform is reporting, making sure that parents have the tools and the information to make the best decisions for their children. In fact, if a parent doesn't know how the school is doing and how the children in the school are doing, how can they know their children are getting the best opportunity available? (S4070)

Isakson praises the new reporting procedures:

ISAKSON (R-GA): More importantly of all, [NCLB] it informs parents and children on an individual basis of their progress, how their schools are doing, and it provides work and money to allow schools that are failing to come up in their performance, and ultimately to meet the success that schools that are succeeding are, in fact, doing. (H2396)

Frist still wants Congress to maintain ultimate control:

FRIST (R-TN): We need to know how well schools and teachers and students are doing so we can assess from a national perspective and also legally empower

parents to make choices for their children. We need to have that information. (S4057)

Murkowski suggests that parents know best:

MURKOWSKI (R-AK): We need to allow parents, teachers and schools to decide what is best for their children. I believe that decisions about a child's education should be made by people who actually know the child's name. (S36)

Gregg comments on problems with Title I funding:

GREGG (R-NH): We have seen a huge amount of money spent on Title I over the last 20 years but we have seen, in fact, no improvement in the performance of low-income children, so they have been left behind. This bill tries to address that issue. It attempts to empower the parents, giving the parents a little bigger say in how their children are taught. If you are a parent and you are in a failing school, under today's rules, you have no rights. Your child is stuck in that school and there is virtually nothing you can do to help your child. (S4071)

Isakson outlines the new Title I provisions:

ISAKSON (R-GA): There are options in this bill, options for the children for the first time and their parents. If a Title I child attends a public school that is ranked as failing, then where consistent with state law, that child will have the opportunity to transfer to a public school that is succeeding. For the first time, Title I funds will be used to allow transportation of that student to ensure their biggest problem, which is mobility, is overcome; and they can attend the school that is public that is best performing to meet their needs. (H2396)

Kyl suggests that competition will help failing schools:

KYL (R-AZ): When you have a choice where you can send your children, not only are you able to take them to the school that best fits their needs and where they can excel but the competition that is provided by those school to the failing schools tends to bring the failing school up as well because as kids leave those schools, obviously people begin asking questions.(S4391)

I believe that giving parents that freedom is the most certain path to improvement in education because parents, unlike politicians, are not going to accept excuses for failure.(S4392)

Kennedy wants parents to be well-informed:

KENNEDY (D-MA): It is a pretty good check on some of the schools as well to find out which schools are working and getting that information back to the parents so the parents understand what is going on and can tell which schools are working. Then they can do some things about it. (S4436)

## **Proposed Program Initiatives**

The following pages cover the President's agenda for three programs proposed in the Blueprint for Education Reform. The first two programs - Reading First and Early Reading First - are new initiatives and address his administration's view that reading scores are too low and what is needed, is the means through which school systems can apply and receive grant money to bolster their current reading programs. Reading First is designed to reinforce reading programs in kindergarten through second grade and Early Reading First is to be inserted into current Head Start and other preschool programs.

The third program addressed in the Blueprint is the Head Start program which has been in existence since the mid 1960's. The President proposes to reform Head Start by changing its priority within the overall goal of school readiness to reading readiness and by moving the program to the Department of Education. All three programs fall under the rubric of early childhood education and address the administration's goal of every child being able to read by the third grade.

### **Reading First**

The Bush Administration has set as its goal, to ensure that every child can read by the third grade. To accomplish this goal, the Reading First Initiative for children in kindergarten through second grade, is designed to give states the funds and the tools they need to eliminate the "reading deficit" (Educational Blueprint, 2001, p.13). The Blueprint does not, however, give a definition of the term "reading deficit." The Reading First objectives were based upon the findings of the National Reading Panel (NRP) that reported children need to be taught specific strategies in order to learn to read (NRP



2000a).

President Bush, in his Blueprint for Reform, has expressed the opinion that effective reading instruction is the key to every child learning to read proficiently by the third grade and that through this initiative, the costs associated with children needing special education services "simply because they did not receive proper reading instruction during the crucial years" (Education Blueprint, 2001, p.13) will be reduced. "Proper reading instruction" includes instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, guided oral reading and comprehension strategies in a scientifically-based reading program aimed toward those children "at risk of falling behind" (P.L.107-110, Reading First Overview).

#### *Presidential View:*

The President tells educators about his new reading initiative:

PRESIDENT BUSH: I hope it's said that the Bush administration is willing to ask the question, "What works?" and then helps districts implement programs that do work. Phonics works. It's an important part of a good reading-- balanced reading curriculum. The reason I know is because I have asked the question to folks at the National Institute of Health. They're not Republicans; they're not Democrats; they're not--they are scientists, who have spent a lot of time figuring out how to make sure all children have the capacity to learn. And while there needs to be balanced reading curriculum, it is critically important for us to make sure the curriculum employed around the country is a curriculum that actually will achieve the results that we want, and that is children reading by the third grade. So I'm sending up to Congress a proposal called Reading First. It is a \$5 billion program over 5 years. It will triple the amount of reading money available for local districts to access (Remarks at Moline Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri, 2001).

#### *Congressional Response:*

The reading initiatives received more support from the House than from the Senate according to the number of individual who brought up the topic in their deliberations. Below is one quote from each chamber of Congress.

Roukema equates better reading with less special ed services needed:  
ROUKEMA (R-NJ): By funding effective reading instruction programs, this bill ensures that more children will receive the help they need before they fall too far behind. Better reading programs mean fewer children in special education and fewer children dropping out of high school. This bill also includes the President's Reading First Initiative, which awards grants to states that establish comprehensive reading programs anchored in scientific research. Obviously, in order to improve education we must start by ensuring that every American child can learn to read. States must be given both the funds and the tools they need to eliminate the reading deficit. Unfortunately, our schools have been failing our students on this basic aspect of learning. (H2400)

Collins supports the Reading First Initiative:  
COLLINS (R-ME): This (best practices research) is one of the reasons why the Reading First Initiative is so very important. We need to put proven teaching methods into the hands of educators. We know that if our classroom teachers are not offered extensive training in the area of literacy, then many of our children will not learn to read to the best of their ability. The reading First Initiative makes professional development a top priority. (S4088)

### Early Reading First

States who participate in the Reading First Initiative have the option of implementing the Early Reading First Initiative designed to be inserted into existing preschool and Head Start Programs. The purpose of Early Reading First is to provide the critical early identification and early reading interventions necessary to prevent reading failure, thereby making it more likely that these children reach the goal of being able to read at grade level by the third grade.

### *Presidential View:*

The President presents his early reading initiative to educators:  
PRESIDENT BUSH: Another program called Early Reading First will put the best reading methods to use in preschool and Head Start Programs. Again, Early Reading First will triple the existing funding for Federal early reading programs. My budget increases the funding for Head Start, while giving it a clear mission: to prepare our Nation's most disadvantaged children to learn as soon as they enter school (Remarks at Moline Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri, 2001).

### *Congressional Response:*

Congress supports the early reading initiative as a means of intervention:

Collins articulates the need for early intervention:

COLLINS (R-ME): I introduced the early Reading Intervention Act to address the urgent need to improve reading skills. It simply does not make sense to test a child's reading ability for the first time in third grade and discover the child's reading skills are far below his or her peers, when, at that point the chances of the student learning to read at grade level by the end of elementary school are less than 25 percent. Since reading is learned more easily and effectively during the early grades, it makes sense to identify reading problems and language-based learning disabilities early when intervention can make a difference. Our goal must be for all students to read by the third grade. By achieving this goal, we can decrease the number of students who will need special education. (S4089)

Platts notes the detrimental effects of poor environments:

PLATTS (R-PA): An area I have a particular interest in is preschool education and the Early Reading First program. Too many children, because they come from broken families and shattered communities, first arrive at the schoolhouse already at a tremendous disadvantage. Quality Pre-K programs, such as those envisioned in Early Reading First, can do much to ensure that these kids will not have to spend their entire elementary years merely trying to catch up. (H2405)

Isakson sees the reading programs as a solution to reading problems:

ISAKSON (R-GA): The important part of the President's initiative is as follows: First, we will have an early reading first program that ensures that children will learn to read and comprehend to the third grade level by the time they reach that level. Second, it ensures that, in reading and in arithmetic, children will be tested annually by the local system and by the state on a test approved by the state to ensure that they are progressing at normal levels. In addition, there is a \$675 million increase to a total of \$975 million to ensure that reading instruction is the very first and most important and paramount instruction that every child gets. (H2396)

### Head Start Reform

Head Start would be reformed by making school readiness - pre-reading and math skills - Head Start's top priority, as opposed to its comprehensive goal of preparing a child to succeed in the school situation through improved socialization skills. Key to

reforming Head Start was the President's goal of moving Head Start to the Department of Education in order to facilitate the school readiness effort.

In a speech, President Bush stated that the Head Start Program would "be more effective if it emphasized the basics of reading and math, gave states management flexibility over the curriculum and the program and held Head Start centers accountable for what children learned" (Goldstein & Strauss, 2003). States would be responsible for the federal subsidies for the program and would decide where the grants would be distributed, and they would be allowed to spend Head Start money only on Head Start programs. Congress would have to decide on this initiative separate from the NCLB initiatives.

*Presidential View:*

The President refers to Head Start in the following three quotes from speeches given to educators around the country. In each he refers to the need to add reading programs, specifically the Early Reading Initiative, to the Head Start program. For this reason, he also believes that Head Start should be moved to the Department of Education, a suggestion that was not popular (Testimony of Ron Herndon, 2001) and did not succeed in coming to fruition.

PRESIDENT BUSH: We need to make sure that our Head Start Programs not only fulfill the social functions and the health functions that they do today but that Head Start Programs become, first and foremost, a reading program to give the little guys the skills necessary to be able to come to these elementary schools prepared and ready to take advantage of the programs that these fine elementary schools, like this one, have got and offer for children (Remarks at Moline Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri, 2001).

PRESIDENT BUSH: And finally, yesterday I proposed additional spending for a national reading initiative that will set this goal: Every child will be reading at the appropriate level by the third grade. It's going to require schools, districts willing

to challenge the status quo if children are failing. It's going to mean we're going to have to think differently about Head Start. Head Start should remain and will remain a place where children are treated for disease and the health and human service component to it. But I think Head Start ought to be moved to the Department of Education, to highlight the need to make sure that our youngsters get a head start on reading and math (Remarks at Townsend Elementary School in Townsend, Tennessee, 2001).

PRESIDENT BUSH: We've also taken the work that has been done to the NIH and have developed a simple go-by for Head Start Programs. And the purpose is to help the Head Start Program become much better at providing the essential skills for early reading to our kids. It's a perfect opportunity to take young kids and to give them just the essentials, so that when they finally get here, that as many people are at the same place as possible before the accountability systems kick in (Remarks in a Leadership Forum in Wilmington, Delaware, 2001).

### *Congressional Response:*

In the following quotes from Congress, it is interesting to note that there were no instances where Head Start was mentioned in the House of Representatives during their deliberations of the NCLB. Of note, additionally, although the President stressed the need to add the reading program to Head Start, not one of the Senators mentioned this, but instead, emphasized the need to use Head Start to ensure school readiness.

Wellstone wants to see Head Start funding increased;

WELLSTONE (D-MN): We know that a child who participates in Head Start is more likely to graduate from High School and less likely to end up in jail or on welfare. However, less than 70 percent of children eligible for Head Start are receiving it. (S3376)

We cheat these children. We do not even fund Head Start, and then we fail them and club them over the head and we call this reform. I want nothing to do with this unless we are going to have a commitment of resources. (S4076)

Carper emphasizes the importance of early intervention programs:

CARPER (D-DE): We have to consider that between 0 and age 5, kids will learn about half of what they know in their lives. If we waste the first 5 years, it is tough to get them back. We know that there is a lot more we can do in terms of parent training. A lot could be done in our States with respect to ensuring that healthier babies are born and raised. We can try to provide assistance with respect to quality child care and programs such as Head Start and make sure

kids - and parents - are given a boost at the age of 3 or 4 and find themselves better prepared to be successful at the age of 5. (S4080)

Wellstone underscores the effect of fewer early learning opportunities:

WELLSTONE (D-MN): Standardized tests in third grade measure seven years of learning for privileged children, but only four years for low-income kids who go no Head Start opportunity. The wealthiest children receive typically three years of rich developmental preschool, at average cost of \$15,000 a year, while half the eligible children of poverty get not even one year of Head Start and, in the poorest urban areas, 75 percent are excluded from Head Start. Any standardized test given in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, therefore is not a test of "school success" – it is a test of wealth or poverty. A 3<sup>rd</sup> grade test for children whom we rob of Head Start is not "school reform" but punitive hypocrisy. (S4077)

Kennedy reiterates the need for additional Head Start funding:

KENNEDY (D-MA): Even though Head Start ranks as the public's favorite Government program, inadequate funding continues to deny Head Start to half of all eligible children. (S4557)

Harkin wants children's needs met in more than academic areas:

HARKIN (D-ND): Part of not leaving a child behind is ensuring that our teachers are trained, our children have access to Head Start, and our children are in safe, well-equipped classrooms. (S3379)

Baucus gives an example of Head Start needs:

BAUCUS (D-MT): This bill (the No Child Left Behind *Amendment*) will help ensure that all children start school ready to learn by investing additional resources in Head Start programs. In Billings, Montana, the Head Start facility is inadequate for the number of students it serves. In fact, they can only keep their doors open through April, when most Head Start programs are able to stay open throughout the school year. Providing additional Head Start funding will help give kids in Billings a chance to start school ready to learn. (S3392)

I have described the President's principles of reform and demonstrated how the rhetoric of the President's speeches and the Congressional debates advocated his position or rebutted the ideals behind the legislation. I also provided examples of support for the three proposed early childhood education initiatives covered in the blueprint and the debates. The next section describes the role that ideologies played in the development of the legislation and in the debates of the NCLB.

## **Ideologies and the NCLB**

Within the discourse of the NCLB debates, are situated the four principle positions that connect rhetorical strategies to political ideology (Brock, Huglen, Klumpp & Howell, 2005). I identified seven separate ideologies in the Presidential documents and speeches and in the Congressional debates of the NCLB that correspond to the political positions. I will discuss the positions first, as they provide a framework within which the ideologies are organized.

### Political Positions

The political positions are useful because policy statements made by politicians in the current political culture do not necessarily correspond to the ideologies with which they profess to be aligned. The four positions are: liberal, radical, conservative, and reactionary. All political ideologies fall under one of these positions. They provide a useful tool to understand the relationship between ideology and political action through specific rhetorical strategies (Brock, et al., 2005).

#### Liberal/Radical

Liberalism historically viewed liberty as fundamental and believed that restrictions to liberty must be justified. Utilitarianism, which is defined as seeking the greatest good for the greatest number, became central to the liberal position. Radicalism was a result of extreme dedication to liberalism (p. 69). Radicals wanted liberty and freedom, but sought structural changes within society that they felt were restricting freedom. Though liberalism has flourished throughout the nation's history and continues to be a significant ideology, radicalism was active in the socialist and communist movements that were prominent until the fall of communism in 1989. Today,



radicalism is mostly a utopian ideal (p. 116).

### Conservative/Reactionary

The conservative position is keyed to the individual, who is seen as innately possessing elements of both good and evil (Thorne, 1990), but at the same time, they believe "human nature is both unchanging and unalterable" (p. 8). The rhetoric of the conservative contains notions of traditionalism, values, and idealism (Brock, et al., 200). Reactionaries are extreme conservatives who want to restore the conditions of a previous period as they believe policies have changed faster than circumstances have justified (p. 71).

### Political Ideologies

The political positions provide a framework to understand where the individual political ideologies are situated. I discovered seven distinct ideologies located in the debates of Congress and in President Bush's speeches and position papers. Conservatism was the ideology most frequently found in the political discourse and five separate ideologies have emerged from the core ideals of conservatism. These are: Libertarian Conservatism, most often referred to as Libertarianism; Religious Right Conservatism; Radical Right or Far Right Conservatism; Neoconservatism, actually a merging of classical liberal and conservative elements; and, Conservatism, which contains the core of ideals from which the others grew (Brock, et al., 200; Love, 2006a; Thorne, 1990).

On the other side of the political aisle are the Liberals, sometimes referred to as Progressives, and the Neoliberals, the individuals whose primary focus is the economy and the market (Rothenberg, 1984). My discussion will begin with the Conservatives and



the four ideologies associated with it.

### Libertarianism

Libertarianism is a reactionary conservative ideology (Thorne, 1990).

Representative Paul (R-TX) professes a Libertarian ideology and his propensity for cutting through the rhetoric to address the bottom line plays a useful role during debates. While I do not know the extent to which others in the House of Representatives pay attention to his verbiage, I found his quotes to be refreshingly honest and to the point. Libertarians believe that you have the right to live your life without the government interfering - but you must not violate the rights of others (Libertarian Party, 2006). They think the size and cost of government is excessive and are against laws that they believe control people's personal choices (Himmelstein, 1990).

Libertarians agree with conservatives about freedom in economic matters, in favor of lowering taxes, and advocate charitable rather than government, welfare. But they agree with liberals on personal tolerance, in favor of the individual's right to choose their own personal habits and lifestyles. They call themselves the "Party of Principle" (Libertarian Party, 2006, FAQ page). The following quote from Representative Paul illustrates the ideals of the Libertarians:

Under the United States Constitution, the federal government has no authority to hold states "accountable" for their education performance. In the free society envisioned by the founders, school are held accountable to parents, not federal bureaucrats. However, the current system of imposing oppressive taxes on America's families and using those taxes to fund federal education programs denies parental control of education by denying them control over their education dollars (Rep. Paul, R-TX, H2418).

The discussion of ideologies in Chapter V will include a more in-depth look at what separates these ideologies from one another and how they have influenced, not

only this legislation, but education generally, over the past few decades.

### Religious Right Ideology

The Religious Right, unlike the other conservative ideologies, has never been able to secure an "insider" position in the White House, though conservative Presidents have given them support by favoring school prayer and family values (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). They want government out of the school business altogether, as they believe the federal government and its courts have done much to ruin schools.

They fault the government for abolishing school prayer, restricting the teaching of intelligent design of the universe, and, in general, for allowing the schools to become anti-American, pro-homosexual, and anti-family (Thorne, 1990). The Religious Right's overall dissatisfaction with public schools over the years has added to the influence of conservative agendas in education reform (Himmelstein, 1990).

While the Religious Right, as a group, has not been as influential as the Far Right or Neoconservatives (Thorne, 1990), they had some impact on the NCLB Act.

Ballenger hopes that school choice issues will be resolved:

BALLENGER (R-NC): H.R.1 allows school choice. It allows children in failing schools to obtain tutoring by private or religiously-affiliated educators. It allows schools to transfer up to 50 percent of their funding to programs that they believe are best for their needs. (H2398)

### Far Right Ideology

The Far Right ideology also referred to as the Radical Right, is situated within a reactionary position. though they are not as radical in their demands on education as is the Religious Right (Brock, et al., 2005). The Heritage Foundation is the primary voice of the Far Right's position on all matters and it has strong views on how education should be reformed (Himmelstein, 1990). The Far Right blames the Federal government for

most of the problems in schools, although they do not go easy on the teachers.

Actually, they tend to have problems with anyone who is not a straight, male WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), and they can be hostile to the interests of minorities, individuals with disabilities, and women (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

In the 1980's, the those associated with the Far Right ideology came close to achieving their goal of abolishing the Department of Education during the presidency of George H. W. Bush. (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). They still advocate to move the regulation and control of education to the states and eliminate all federal funding for schools. The Far Right is in favor of the privatization of schools; in fact, they would like to see many government programs privatized (Himmelstein, 1990). They believe a "free market" that stresses competition is the ideal and competition is what makes private schools better. Gifted and talented programs in schools are important, but special education, bilingual education, and programs for minorities, they believe, are wastes of money (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

The Far Right's influence can be seen especially from the private school and voucher proponents in Congress, but their influence can be found in other areas of the reform effort, as well.

Gregg thinks that private school should be an option for parents:

GREGG (R-NH): The second step is equally important. It is not in the language unfortunately. That is to take a few schools that we know are failing and that have failed year in and year out and say to the parents of those kinds in those schools: We are going to give you a full option of choice. We are going to allow you to put your child in another school, either a public school or a private school. (S4071)

Sessions wants children to have more options:

SESSIONS (R-AL): We need to help them decide what to do fundamentally, and that is, to find out whether children are learning properly and to give those

schools more freedom and flexibility to do that. If the schools continue to fail to teach our children, we need to give those children some options to reach outside that school. Because it is wrong; it is not right at its most fundamental level, to say to a poor child who has no other option, but to go to public school: You must go to this failing school. You just go there anyway. (S4073)

Kyl refers to the education model as a monopoly:

KYL (R-AZ): I believe we need a new model, and we should begin by recognizing that if we want to see revolutionary improvement in education, we need to consider the benefits of a system that is more dynamic than the monopoly model in place today. (S4074)

### Neoconservative Ideology

Of the four conservative ideologies in mainstream politics today, the Neoconservatives are considered the “centrist” right-leaning group. While they propose specific changes to educational policy, they do not employ the reactionary methods for seeking change that the Far Right or Religious Right do. The Neoconservatives believe that schools have been subjected to excessive federal court intervention. As a result, standards have eroded, a “basic” education has been overtaken by a curriculum that is not rigorous enough, and, we are losing the ability to compete in the world (Kristol, 2006).

Proponents of Neoconservative ideology believe that our education system was once a “perfect” system to which they want to return. They recommend that schools “return” to a basic curriculum, develop higher standards, initiate a national testing program, and require schools to be accountable for successes and failures (Kristol, 2006). The Neoconservatives are not concerned with equity or equality as they feel these issues were solved years ago (Rothenberg, 1984). They do not support moving public school children to private schools as they feel the federal government should oversee the nation's education systems.

Their influence is more visible in the NCLB than any other ideology.

Thomas supports a Republican agenda for schools:

THOMAS (R-WY): We have to have accountability. We have to have choices. We have to have some measurement of productivity in order to have an education program and the kind that we want. Republicans have a strong agenda: returning choice to parents, giving them charter schools, giving them the opportunity, if the school is not performing, to move their child to another public school, sending dollars to the classroom, giving families greater education choice, supporting exceptional teachers, and focusing on basic education. (S4024)

Frist wants to reinvent the education system:

FRIST (R-TN): When we use the word "reform," it scares some people because reform means such dramatic change, But we have to admit that it is time to change, to reinvent, to reconceptualize what K-12 Federal education programs are all about. What is the role of the Federal government? Why are we even discussing it in this body? I think there are two reasons. Over the past 35 years we have invested a large amount of money, a lot of resources, and we are failing. All of us know that by every global comparison, standard testing assessment, we are failing our children. (S4056)

Roukema wants the Federal government to demand results from education:

ROUKEMA (R-NJ): H.R.1 enhances accountability and demands results. Too many education programs have failed. Federal education programs must contain mechanisms that make it possible for the American people to evaluate whether they work. This bill provides accountability and demands results through high standards and assessments. And it provides appropriate responses to address failure. (H2400)

### Liberal/Progressive Ideology

Those who profess to be liberals sometimes also refer to themselves as progressives, and the two terms are frequently used interchangeably today. Liberals consider themselves to hold the most compassionate beliefs as they are in favor of providing more social services and assistance, in general, to individuals who live in impoverished circumstances (Love, 2006b). They are supporters of "big government" and have no problem with the federal government being involved in finding solutions, usually in the form of monetary support, to help level the playing field between those

with a lot of money and those with little money (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Liberals support tax initiatives to fund education and those programs needed for a "safety net" (Brock, et al., 2005), sharing the belief that by helping people who live in disadvantaged situations, stresses caused by their circumstances can be relieved long enough to eventually help them to pull themselves out of poverty.

In the debates of the NCLB, the liberal politicians are pushing for fully-funded programs such as Title I and Head Start. They want mandated tests to be paid for by the federal government instead of shifting funding for the development and administration of the tests to the states, and they are against testing being used in a punitive manner.

The late Senator Wellstone was one of the most liberal members of Congress and probably the least worried about his words offending anyone.

Wellstone gives his anti-tax cut speech to Congress:

WELLSTONE (D-MN): I want to say to people in any coffee shop anywhere, that I would far prefer to put much more money into children and education - the IDEA program, Title I, the afterschool program, Head Start - than Robin Hood-in-reverse tax cuts where everyone here knows that the vast percentage of the benefits go to the very top one-percent, the wealthiest and highest income citizens. This is all a matter of priorities and values. (S3377)

Reid offers his support for a \$250 billion funding amendment:

REID (D-NV): Part of not leaving a single child behind is ensuring that our teachers are trained, our children have access to Head Start, and our children are in safe, well-equipped classrooms. Senator Harkin's amendment invests an additional \$250 billion over 10 years to improve education. With that investment, we can greatly expand child development programs, make Head Start available to all 3- and 4-year-olds,[and] reduce class size to no more than 18 students. (S3383)

Kennedy is concerned about perceived unfairness in the bill:

KENNEDY (D-MA): We cannot knock down all the walls of unfairness in our society, but one thing we know for sure: If a child does not start off with the ability to learn and is not challenged in those early years of education, it is

difficult to believe they will be equipped to play a meaningful role in our society. We, in each generation, have to find ways to make sure that playing field is going to be fair and equal and that those children who will be coming up all across this Nation, and their families, can have confidence in the public school system. (S4433)

Representative Mink was one of only a few House members who spoke of problems with the legislation. Since there was a short time for debate, most who spoke supported the bill, even though they did not get everything they wanted included in it.

Mink wants poor schools to have the same resources given to wealthier schools: MINK (D-HI): We should not be focusing time, effort, and money on disrupting and dismantling children's base of security, the neighborhood school. Instead we should be sending in reinforcements: adequate funding, so poor schools have the same chance to succeed as wealthier schools; qualified, strong, and experienced teaching staff, so they form a crucial foundation and get to know students and their individual problems; and the kind of learning atmosphere that voucher proponents endorse for private schools: smaller class sizes and extended learning time and tutoring before and after school. Instead of forcing the child to go where the resources are, we should be doing what we should have done all along - bring the resources to the child. (H2401)

### Neoliberal Ideology

In the 1980's, leaders of industry began putting pressure on the Reagan and Bush administrations for extensive and expensive modifications to schools to keep our slumping economy in step with other western countries. The Human Capital ideology (Rothenberg, 1984) holds that the public school systems need to provide initial vocational training, but community colleges are the ideal setting for preparing non-college bound individuals for careers. For public schools, they recommended more courses in science and math, an increase in "core" requirements, more computers and the latest materials, and had no problem with the federal government becoming more involved in the running of the Nation's schools (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

In time, this group came to be called the Neoliberals because of some shared



beliefs, though the altruism of the progressives was absent in this group's worldview as they believed the progressive movement was out of touch with reality (Rothenberg, 1984). The Neoliberals are still supported by business and industry leaders who advocate competition over cooperation, longer days, longer school years, and more emphasis placed on individual initiative and high standards in the school (Apple, 2004). They are interested in the "bottom line" - the student as a commodity - and suggest that where education departments are low on funding, the business community/private sector be called upon to help. Adopt-a school programs across the country were an outgrowth of this notion (Rothenberg, 1984).

Though the Neoliberals have never succeeded in getting all the changes they have recommended, their influence is evident throughout the NCLB process. The following quotes are examples from the debates that provide evidence of their impact on educational policy reform.

Kildee wants schools to be more competitive:

KILDEE (D-MI): In a time when we are in an increasingly competitive world, we can no longer tolerate low-performing schools that place the education of our children at risk. Very simply, this means providing additional resources and interventions to help students in those low-performing schools reach high standards. If schools are still failing after substantive intervention, then consequences must indeed exist. (H2396)

Kyl applauds the President for including more competition in the reform package:

KYL (R-AZ): To the President's great credit, the Bush blueprint recognized that competitive pressure, and the threat of it, is essential to triggering the meaningful accountability that can spur improvement. That is the insight upon which we should be building. We should be judged by our willingness to make changes that promote innovation, competition, and parental choice - in short, freedom. (S4074/4075)

Gregg stresses the importance of competition in education:

GREGG (R-NH): We are giving parents some options—especially low-income



parents, and especially single mothers in urban communities who have no options today—as a result of giving them these options and bringing competition into the school system, and it is competition that produces quality in our society, whether you choose to go to a Burger King over a McDonald's because of the competition or a McDonald's over a Burger King. In education, we have no competition today. We have no force for improvement that comes from the marketplace or that comes from the pressure of having to perform in order to get clients. (S4072)

Sessions wants to see results from the money spent:

SESSIONS (R-AL): If a teacher or school is consistently failing, and not meeting those standards, perhaps at that point we need to confront the leadership at that school. Maybe we can find better leadership and improve those test scores. Because the American taxpayer, the American citizen, is entitled to know whether or not their money is producing results. How more basic can it be? (S4073)

Collins wants to improve reading in order to decrease students in special ed:

COLLINS (R-MA): Our goal - the goal set by the President - must be for all students to read by the third grade. By achieving this goal, we can decrease the number of students who will need special education and ensure that every child - all of our students - have the necessary tools to handle the curriculum in the future years. (S4089)

I have provided an overview of the liberal and conservative ideologies that have played a role in the development of the legislation to reform education and in the process of debating the legislation. The two liberal and four conservative ideologies (in addition to conservatism) do not impact the legislation and debates equally and they overlap each other in such instances where a particular politician chooses to use positions from different worldviews in his or her speeches. I did not discuss ideologies or their influence in the above section as this will be examined thoroughly in Chapter V. In the next and final section of this chapter, I will summarize the results of my data analysis and divulge the three issues I have chosen to highlight in the discussions in Chapter V.

## Summary

The purpose of this research study was to discover the means through which a new presidential administration was able to impact federally-funded early education programs for children in pre-Kindergarten through the third grade. This was accomplished by studying data recorded throughout the year 2001, that referred to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1994. The results reported in this chapter answered the two research questions:

1. What initiatives did the Bush administration propose through the Blueprint for Education Reform that would impact early childhood education?
2. What role did ideologies play in the development of proposals and the debates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, specifically as they impacted educational programs for the pre-kindergarten to third-grade age groups?

The data used to investigate the research questions came from the President's Blueprint for Educational Reform, speeches made by President George Bush to schools and other groups throughout 2001, and individuals' quotes from the floor debates of both the Senate and the House of Representatives of the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress of the United States. The findings were grouped using the four principles of education reform as outlined in The Blueprint. These were: (1) accountability for results, (2) standards of excellence, (3) flexibility, and, (4) empowering parents with choices. The fifth section covered the President's proposed program initiatives: (1) Reading First, (2) Early Reading First, and (3) Head Start. Ideologies found within the rhetoric of the debates formed the final section of results from my study.

In the following chapter, I discuss three issues related to the education reform

effort that I felt, stood out from the rest of the data: (1) Testing, (2) Failure, and, (3) Parent Involvement. Because of the volume of data collected, I could not discuss all the results from my study. I have named these three issues the "Cornerstone Issues" of this study. The term "Cornerstone" was chosen for several reasons. President Bush used this term from time to time in his speeches, especially when referring to the concept of testing. Additionally, cornerstone denotes a foundation and the three Cornerstone Issues are the foundation of my findings. A cornerstone serves as an indispensable part or basis for something (Soukhanov, 1984) and this notion corresponds with my view of how these issues emerged as most representing the multiple views or ideologies of the players in this study, while illustrating how deficit theories came to be uncovered in the data.

## Chapter V

### DISCUSSION

I have been a professional educator since 1978, when I received a Master's Degree in Special Education and embarked on my first true teaching experience - working with adolescent girls in a state correctional institution. This was not where I had intended to start my teaching career as I had really wanted a position with Head Start. Since there was no Head Start position open at the time in the general area where I wanted to live, I took the first offer in Tullahoma, Tennessee. Although I had not intended to learn anything from this experience - after all, I was the one who was supposed to impart the knowledge - I gained insight into the lives of marginalized young girls that has stayed with me to this day. What I learned from these girls was more valuable than anything I learned in college and has been applicable to every group of children with whom I have worked, but particularly so in my interactions with children and families living in disadvantaged economic circumstances.

I learned that all children had stories to tell. I also learned that children and youth who came from families in the lower economic strata had stories that few wanted to hear. I came from a typical middle-class family and grew up attending one elementary school and one high school, which were within a half mile of each other. I knew that there were many people who did not live in situations as fortunate as mine, but until I spent two years with this particular group of girls, I did not understand that poverty was more than a lack of money.

Poverty, as I discovered, was having little voice into what happened to you. Poverty was when decisions for your future were made by politicians in places far

removed from your world. Poverty was accepting the unacceptable and then being condemned for doing so. Poverty was not just a lack of food, but poor nutrition and poor health. Most of all, poverty was a void full of misunderstandings, low expectations, and false assumptions.

In January 2002, President George Bush signed the *No Child Left Behind Act* into law. In 2005, I completed my analysis of the evolution of this Act and the ideologies that informed the reform effort. What I discovered, not only reinforced the lessons I learned from the Highland Rim girls 25 years ago, but saddened me to realize that, with regard to children living in disadvantaged situations, attitudes never seem to change. President Bush's reform was targeted toward the group of children eligible for Title I services, and much of the dialog from speeches and the NCLB debates refers to these children and their families. Unfortunately, the negative perceptions of children and families living in poverty are as strong now as they were in the 1960's when Lyndon Johnson enacted his War on Poverty.

These negative perceptions have been perpetuated by a myth, unspoken, yet clearly present in the discourse of educational reform (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This myth presumes that individuals who live in disadvantaged circumstances have deficits of character that are responsible for their inability to succeed as well as others. The myth is also responsible for the idea that the deficits within these individuals can be identified and corrected as the example from one of President Bush's speeches illustrates below.

We're here to applaud a school . . . that not only measures, but when it finds deficiency, corrects; a school that recognizes an accountability will work when you view each child as a child, not as some group--part of a group. Accountability system says every child matters, and when we find a child deficient, we're going

to correct (Bush, Remarks at Merritt Extended Elementary School, 2001).

Upon completing my analysis of President Bush's Blueprint and the debates in the House of Representatives and Senate of the resolution for reform, I chose three issues to discuss. I named these the Cornerstone Issues as they appeared to me to be the foundational issues in the reform effort: (1) testing, (2) failure, and (3) parent involvement. Of the many issues debated, these three appeared to me to be the most important, elicited the most passionate rhetoric, or were referred to most frequently. I will discuss each issue separately, but there will be some overlap in my discussions as each issue is linked to the others. Within these discussions, I will highlight examples that demonstrate why I believe deficit thinking remains a force to reckon with in our educational policies and why I agree with Urie Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Weiss, 1983) when he says that we need a new paradigm to replace the deficit model.

The following quote, from Sarason is a good beginning for my discussion.

We must criticize - not the need and desire to change - but we must be alert to mistakes made in the past that we should try to avoid. The first mistake, still being made, is that we believe there is a mandated way of changing and structuring schools that will make future change unnecessary - that there is a way of solving the problem so that we never have to solve it again. But there is a more grievous mistake. Because we are not dealing with problems that have solutions in the natural science sense of solution, those of us in the educational arena deal with problems that must be solved again, and again, and again (1987, p.118).

## **Testing**

Testing, along with its sister issues of accountability and standards, is the hot-button issue of the NCLB Act. In this instance, "testing" refers to mandatory standardized testing for the purpose of determining how well a teacher or school is educating students. Those who are more familiar with the world of business favor

testing and accountability, while educators are more likely to oppose the increased reliance on test scores and the pressure it puts on teachers and students when one test score carries so much weight. Raywid's comments reflect educators' concerns with the application of the "business" model in education.

The economic/business analogy seems to have shaped and propelled the drive for accountability in education during the past decade. Since there are no profits to serve as indicators of whether or not schools are doing a good job, test scores have been assigned that function instead. The insistence on quantitative measures of school effectiveness has reduced educational outcomes to testable products and deemphasized the role of the school in other areas, such as mastering higher-level intellectual skills or preparing young people for civic participation. It has also left little room for the process goals that are important to parents: the kinds and qualities of school experiences that they simply want their youngsters to undergo, quite apart from specific operations regarding outcomes (Raywid, in Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 194).

The two sides of the business model debate come from President Bush (below) and Senator Murray (D-WA), in the quote following my discussion of the President's quote.

When there's a problem diagnosed, help comes. That's what's so important about having accountability; it's the cornerstone for reform. I'm going to ask Congress to pass legislation that says that any school district which receives Federal money must design a test on an annual basis so that we know. It's the framework for addressing problems early, before it's too late. It says that consequences matter, but more importantly, if we set up the systems right, by disaggregating results, by treating each child as a person, not part of some overall group, we begin to have an education system that says each child matters, and we're going to track each child as he or she goes through the system. It's a critically important part of education reform (Bush, Remarks at Moline Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri, 2001).

The above quote from President Bush is a good example of the paradoxes that can be found throughout the NCLB discussions. He states that the new system will treat each child as an individual, not part of a group, by disaggregating results, when, in fact,

each child is reported as part of a homogeneous group. The scores of the groups are disaggregated from the whole, not the individual children's scores. The children are not treated as individuals. Instead, each is part of a statistic on a report that quantifies results.

While some view this process as progress toward achieving equity, disaggregation also presents the opportunity for one or more of these groups to be singled out and even blamed for causing the entire school to fail. The composition of the groups - according to race, socioeconomic status, or ability - separates the children so that they become more visible as part of this "homogeneous" group, and if that group fails to meet the minimum standard, each will be labeled a failure even if they did not fail. In my opinion, disaggregation will not be the means of achieving greater equity under these circumstances when it singles out the same groups of children for deficiencies as were singled out forty years ago for being "culturally deprived".

Disaggregation could be used for more insidious purposes. Special education has been targeted for years and disaggregated results could, unfortunately, provide statistics that some individuals have been looking for. Radical conservative groups have been attempting to abolish special education in the schools for years using the argument that this group uses too great a percentage of available funds for education with the nation receiving little in return for its investment (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Apple, 2004).

Senator Murray's quote represents another side of the testing debate when he mentions another problem with putting too much emphasis on standardized tests - the drop-out rate.



Just giving tests as required in the bill does not assure the students will do better. I fear it means, without the backing of resources behind it, so the children can learn what is required of them to pass the test, the children will fail and drop out of school. And yes, 5 years from now we may have a higher percentage of kids doing better on tests but nobody will be testing the kids who didn't make it, who dropped out, who failed, who are not in the school system anymore. Those are the kids we cannot leave behind (Murray, D-WA, S3823).

Senator Hutchison (R-TX) is one of many in the Senate who blames teachers for problems in the schools. In the following quote, she is making assumptions about teachers that she does not back up with statistics. She is blaming teachers for what she believes will happen if the legislation is passed.

But the schools that are failing are the schools that are afraid of accountability. There are teachers who do not want to have tests. Why don't they want to have tests? You can only assume they are concerned that they will not pass and that their students will not pass. That is not acceptable (Hutchison, R-TX, S4087).

On the side that challenges additional mandatory testing, is a group of legislators, mostly Democrats, who oppose the testing agenda for the inequities it highlights. The late Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) was one of the staunchest supporters of education and early childhood education in Congress. He could always be counted on to rally support for the Head Start Program and was the most outspoken of all the legislators on issues of equity and equality. When he died in a plane crash in 2002, early childhood education lost one of its strongest advocates in the legislature. The following, in reference to the testing proposals, is a typical Paul Wellstone rant, full of passion and candor for the children he was so concerned about:

If you go down in the trenches, in a lot of the inner-city neighborhoods and rural areas, you have kids on free or reduced lunch programs. You have homes where sometimes they have to move two or three times a year. You have schools that are crumbling, schools that don't have the resources, schools the don't have the laboratory facilities and schools that don't have the textbooks. Now what you are saying is you are going to have tests and state with precision the obvious: Guess

what? Children who come to school hungry, children who come from families who don't have adequate housing or are even homeless, children who are not kindergarten ready, children who do not receive all of the good stimulation and all of the nurturing that they need to have before kindergarten, those children who come to schools without the facilities, without the best teachers, without the salaries for the teachers, we are going to find out through tests that those children and those schools aren't doing as well as a lot of other schools which have all the resources in the world with which to work. That is what the test does. Absolutely nothing—not without the resources (Wellstone, D-MN, S3822).

Senator Wellstone recognized the inequities inherent in testing programs designed to close the achievement gap. He realized, as did many others, that those who were doing well would continue to do well and those who were not, could not improve unless programs outside of education addressed the issues of equity and equality. Education cannot do all the things that are required in this legislation as the problems did not arise out of education in the first place. Low-income families suffer from inequities in housing and employment, along with a lack of resources to ensure nutritional and health needs are met. The genesis of many of these problems lie in policies that fail to provide the safety nets many families need.

The following quote, also from Senator Wellstone, is strongly worded, but one could never suggest that he hides what he wants to say in unclear rhetoric. This quote is an example of how the disaggregated scores can be used in a negative manner - to single out the children who live in poverty - and compare their successes, or lack thereof, to the children who live in more fortunate circumstances and whose schools have the best resources.

The White House will test the poor against the rich and then announce that the poor are failing. Federally required tests without federally required equity amounts to clubbing these children over the head after systematically cheating them. That is exactly what we are doing. We know in advance which kids will fail. So this is a plan not for reform, not for equality, but for guaranteed humiliation of

children (Wellstone, D-MN, S4076).

The late Representative Mink (D-HI) was another supporter of education who passed away after the NCLB was signed into law. She was opposed to the testing proposals for many of the same reasons as Senator Wellstone.

The annual tests contained in this bill will not be a vehicle for success, but rather a harbinger of punishment for children, teachers, principals, and schools. In the end, it will be communities that suffer from the misplaced emphasis on these tests (Mink, D-HI, H2401).

Some of the opposition to testing was based on the premise that increased testing was not needed in order to find out how well students and schools were doing.

It is clear that there will be increasing testing. This testing raises significant questions. Most of the states, if not all of the states, engage in rather elaborate testing already. The 1994 ESEA reauthorization embarked on a very elaborate process of setting state standards. What a child should know, developing evaluations so those standards are tested, and imposing a scheme of evaluations—not every year for every child, but a scheme that made sense to a particular state. Now we are saying, no, one size does fit all for every child, every year, for grades 3 through 8 (Reed, D-RI, S4078).

Senator Reed's phrase, "one size fits all," represents what I see as frustration with the wording of the testing legislation. Many of the legislators who debated the NCLB in their respective chambers of Congress have held their offices long enough to see many iterations of policy change. Senator Reed appears to be saying that the policies in effect from the 1994 legislation were adequate to meet the requirements for testing without being too uncompromising. He and some of the other Democrats appear to be asking if the policy change was really necessary because of a crisis in education, or if the party in power mostly wanted a change to more closely align policy with their ideologies.

Another Democrat, Senator Wellstone, also expressed the belief that more

testing was not a suitable remedy.

I have never met a teacher and I have never met a parent who has said to me what we need is more and more tests, tests, tests (Wellstone, D-MN, S3822).

Senator Kennedy agrees with the stance taken by Senators Reed and Wellstone.

Testing and accountability are important, but they are only the measures of reform, they are not the reform themselves (Kennedy, D-MA, S3818).

During the debates of the NCLB legislation, a common complaint addressed in the media and in the debates themselves, was that the increased emphasis on testing and test results could lead to teachers teaching the test instead of teaching the curriculum outlined by their states. Two senators saw this as a positive rather than a negative aspect of testing.

Some say, I just don't like these tests mandated by the Federal Government. They direct policy in teaching and teachers have to teach to the test. But if the test is a good test, and the test determines whether or not a child can handle basic math or can read and write, and teachers are teaching to that test, I say, well done. I say that is progress (Sessions, R-AL, S4073).

A lot of people wring their hands and talk about tests: We don't want tests; we don't want too many artificial tests; we don't want teachers teaching to the tests. If we are testing for the basic skills, why wouldn't we teach to the test and improve what the children are learning? If we teach to the test and the test is fundamental reading, fundamental math, fundamental science, fundamental history, then we need to have a standard by which to judge what is happening in our schools (Hutchison, R-TX, S4087).

A concern of legislators that grew out of the "teaching-to-the-test" issue was the worry that federal authorities were going to have too much control over what was taught in the schools and that state and local control would be weakened. The first quote is from Representative Paul (R-TX) who, as far as I can determine, is the only Libertarian in Congress. He follows neither the Democratic nor Republican agenda, but I found that I could always count on him to inject "truth" and some humor, whether

intentional or not, into the debates.

Congress is now considering whether to continue this [reform] cycle by passing the national five-year plan in HR-1, the so-called "No Child Left Behind Act." A better title for this bill is "No Bureaucrat Left Behind" because this bill represents a massive increase in federal control over education (Paul, R-TX, H2417).

National testing will inevitably lead to a national curriculum as teachers will teach what their students need to know in order to pass their mandated "assessment." After all, federal funding depends on how students perform on these tests. Proponents of this approach dismiss these concerns by saying "there is only one way to read and do math." Well then what are the battles about phonics versus whole language or new math versus old math about? (Paul, R-TX, H2418).

The following quote is from a member of the House. The House rules stipulate a maximum of two hours for debate on legislation. After debating the rules for 15 minutes, they were left with less than two hours for the entire issue of educational reform. Consequently, few members of the House had the opportunity to address the issues of the NCLB. Most of those who spoke were members of the House education committee who rose in support of their work on the committee and in support of the President's agenda. Only two Representatives, both Democrats and both women, were against the legislation: Representative Mink and Representative Rivers. I have provided a quote from Representative Mink on the testing issue and Representative Rivers' quote follows:

Mr. Chairman, I arise in opposition to H.R.1. Less bad is not good. It is not legitimate to argue for passage of a flawed proposal on the basis that it could be worse. What we have before us is a huge federal intrusion into the jurisdiction of State legislators and local school boards. What we have is a poll-driven illusion of reform through standardized testing, a vehicle that has come under recent scrutiny. This is a power grab by the federal government, pure and simple. It represents an attempt to leverage only 7 percent of the funding for American schools into control of the entire K-12 system. Such action flies in the face of our long-standing tradition of local control of education. We should not encourage the public to turn their eyes to Washington regarding educational matters.

But even if this power grab succeeds, Congress cannot deliver on the promises this bill makes. Testing is not the panacea its advocates claim. This bill is a mirage. It is not what it seems to be, and it makes a terrible trade. It stands a two-century tradition of community-controlled schools on its head in exchange for the mere illusion of reform. Vote "no" (Rivers, D-MI, H2404).

I have covered the topics related to testing as debated by Congress, but not covered in the above discussion is the impact of the testing issue on early childhood education. Although not specifically mentioned as early childhood education requirements, some of the deliberations did cover this age range from birth to eight-years-old. One reason that this needs to be discussed is because the legislation added a new requirement for third graders that mandated all children must be able to read by the end of third grade. Below is a brief discussion of this topic.

#### Early Childhood Education and Testing

Early childhood education has been impacted by the issue of testing through requirements that were enacted and through suggestions that were not included, but may be in the future, if the reform trend continues in the direction it was headed at the completion of this study. One of the tenets of reform that has been repeated in the media, in speeches, and in the debates of the NCLB Act is that all children must be able to read at a proficient level by the end of third grade. The Act does not specify where to place the proficiency level, but leaves that up to the states as part of their standards. The requirements for reading do not allow for differences in ability, such as for students with learning disabilities, but only states that all children will be able to read by the end of third grade.

The Reading First Initiatives, - Reading First and Early Reading First - developed as an addition to Title I of the ESEA, were designed to help children learn to read in

order to meet the new requirement. The purpose of Early Reading First is to provide preschool age children with the knowledge and skills necessary to take advantage of reading instruction once they enter kindergarten. Specifically, the section reads: "To improve pre-reading skills in children ages 3 - 5, particularly children from low-income families, in high-quality oral language and literature rich environments" (P.L.107-110, 2002).

The testing issue in early childhood education has grown out of the Reading First and Early Reading First initiatives and the standards developed by the states for both preschool and K-3. Testing, as it involves preschoolers, has become an especially hot-button issue with notable early childhood researchers, such as Edward Zigler and Sharon Kagan, among others, entering the fray. Kagan and Scott-Little (2004) express the concern that standards developed by states (27 states as of May 2002) will be misused and instead of being a guide for student learning and for professional development, they will be used to force more academic learning and its subsequent testing, into the preschool curriculum. If this happens, as they think the trend is headed, the traditional preschool, where readiness is the key word, will be replaced by cognitive learning, solely. Gone will be the emphasis on social and emotional skills, on parent involvement, and on discovery of their world, that many preschools have traditionally encompassed.

Zigler and Styfco's (2004) worries with regard to early childhood revolve around the Head Start program and fears that the Bush administration will throw out what works and has worked for years, while trying to give the program to the states to run. Already, some components of the program are being watered down or replaced - emotional development and social competence - and reading is being emphasized. No



state has a developed high-quality preschool education on the level of Head Start, to date (Neuman, 2003), but many states have begun state-wide pre-kindergarten programs that have been loosely based on the Head Start model among others.

Although the period for my data collection ended in May 2001 when the debates in Congress were finished, I have discovered research since that time that I feel is appropriate to mention when it either corroborates or refutes the data I collected. I have attempted to keep up with the latest research in early childhood so in some cases, I have additional information that coincides with the issues discussed in this dissertation. The following paragraphs regarding the testing of preschoolers is an instance that I feel must be included as it demonstrates how the issues continue to evolve.

The problem of allowing testing to creep into early childhood education was increased when, in the fall of 2003, 450,000 Head Start four-year-olds were given a standardized test called the Head Start National Reporting System. It is a multiple-choice test, administered individually, with sub-tests in English language competency, vocabulary, letter names, and mathematics (Meisels, 2004). Problems with the testing, as reported by the Erikson Institute (Meisels, 2004), include: no justification for testing every child rather than random sampling, no external validity, construct underrepresentation, and, lastly, but perhaps most importantly, a misguided rationale for the testing in the first place. Meisels (2004) points out that testing as a tool for documenting a child's progress during the school year, is helpful for both teachers and parents.

Tests such as this are based on the assumption that Head Start children, whose



families are poor, are more alike than they are different and therefore the test will yield valuable information about the program. Head Start children are no more alike than any other group of preschoolers, regardless of family background, and this age group, as a rule, is likely to vary widely in their abilities because of variabilities in their development.

This testing and standards trend for preschoolers is troubling but many researchers in the early childhood education field are working on resolving some of the issues. We must allow preschoolers the opportunity to explore their worlds and develop in all the domains as at this age, no one domain of development is more important than the others. For the children who have not had as many opportunities because of impoverished backgrounds, it is even more important that academics not be the focus of their preschool years.

The following section discusses the second cornerstone issue - failure. I was initially surprised at the number of times the concept of failure came to mind as I read through the NCLB debates. Sometimes it was a hidden notion buried in the rhetoric, but more often than that, it was explicitly stated in the text of the debates.

## **Failure**

This was not one of the education reform principles. It was not explicitly debated in Congress, but the concept of failure did emerge as an issue from the rhetoric of education reform. I discovered "failure" throughout all the texts I read to analyze the reform process, situated within the rhetoric of deficits and blame.

When President Bush began his campaign for president, he (then as Governor of Texas) decided to use education reform as a campaign issue, and a reason had to be given to justify the need for reform. Since radical conservatives had been advocating

major systemic reforms in education since the Reagan presidency, a platform was already in place ready to be assumed by then-Governor Bush.

A "crisis" in education became the justification for the latest push toward educational reform and crisis rhetoric provided the sound bites to prepare the public for major changes should George Bush be elected. This rhetoric included: charges of a drastic decline in achievement, said to be backed up by research; the assigning of blame for the decline to ineffective teacher training programs and incompetent educators; and the failure of our schools to keep up with the successes of other countries. These claims were documented through the quotes presented in Chapter IV.

As I began scanning the transcripts of the debates, the concept of failure began to emerge from the readings, regardless of the ideology of the speaker. As I listed themes from the rhetoric, failure continued to stand out. The President's Blueprint for Reform also contained references to failure as did the speeches President Bush made to various groups about his education reform initiative.

In my analysis of the process of developing and passing the NCLB Act, failure was implied so often that it came to be an issue of concern before I had isolated any other theme as standing out from the rest. The problems of failure and under-achievement underlie the "crisis in education" that was used by many politicians as the impetus to reform the education system. The discussions of failure concerned problems in the schools, the teachers, the administrators, the students, or the parents. Anyone could be labeled a failure, except those making the rules.

I discovered failure linked to the deficit model throughout my analysis and the examples came from all levels of the federal government, beginning at the top of the

power pyramid:

By the way, in order for there to be accountability that works, there must be a consequence for success, and a consequence for failure. There is no such thing as an accountability system unless something happens with success and failure. I believe we ought to reward success, and I believe, after a reasonable period of time, if a school will not teach and it will not change, something else must happen. And we're having a big debate on what the something else is in the Nation's Capital. There's a big debate on that. But one thing is for certain: I will not accept a plan that accepts failure, because our children are too important. One thing is for certain: People must be given different options if their children are in schools that simply won't adjust (Bush, Remarks at Concord Middle School, North Carolina, 2001).

In the above quote, President Bush is referring to the idea that the federal government needs to decide on specific consequences for "schools that fail." The phrases "schools that fail", "failing schools" or "kids trapped in failing schools" are found numerous times in the education reform rhetoric. As I described previously, a failing school is defined as one in which one or more of the disaggregated groups in that school fail to meet the performance standard. While "schools" cannot actually fail - people do - the politicians, nevertheless, used this phrase so often, it appeared to be a motto for the reform effort. The two quotes, below, provide examples of the use of this phrase.

Our public education system is failing. It is failing because there is such a variation of standards. Some of our public schools are terrific, but they are not all terrific. Some are even abysmal (Hutchison, R-TX, S4070).

Obviously, in order to improve education we must start by ensuring that every American child can learn to read. States must be given both the funds and the tools they need to eliminate the reading deficit. Unfortunately, our schools have been failing our students on this basic aspect of learning (Roukema, R-NJ, H2400).

The following quote from Senator Dewine (D-OH) is a good example of the

notion that schools can lift families out of poverty and make up for what no other segment of society has been able to do.

Our nation today is a nation split into two Americas. One where children get educated and one where they do not. This gap in educational knowledge and the gap in economic standing is entrenching thousands upon thousands of children into an underclass and into futures filled with poverty and little hope and little opportunity. We see areas where the children are not being educated as well as we would like and where the income level shows that disparity (Dewine, D-OH, S4021).

There are many reference to the achievement gap that create a perception that the schools and the children in the schools are responsible for this "gap" in achievement - as though disparities in family income explain all the discrepancies in children's academic progress. Two quotes follow - one from a Republican Representative and the other from a Democratic Senator - that illustrate how the legislators used this phrase in the debates.

After 35 years and more than \$130 billion of well-intentioned Washington spending, we have yet to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers (Castle, R-DE, H2406).

We are in the throes of redefining the Federal role in education in this country. Part of that legislation says to States: We expect you to narrow the achievement gap for all your students over the next 10 years. We expect your students to perform at higher marks, making progress along the achievement path toward being able to read well and doing math well (Carper, D-DE, S4563).

Education did not cause poverty, it cannot not eradicate poverty, and as long as some children grow up in an environment void of stimulating experiences or opportunities, they will have a more difficult time achieving at the same level as their more affluent peers (Neuman, 2003). They can catch up and even surpass the others with quality educational opportunities combined with better nutrition, substantial housing, and a society that cares rather than blames.

Under the new reporting procedures, a school may be deemed as failing because one disaggregated group failed to reach the minimum performance standard. If, for example, the group of students who are not proficient in English, do not meet the standard, the whole school is said to be failing, when, in fact, everyone else in the school may be doing very well. The final aggregated report says the *school* is failing if a percentage of students in one of the groups fails. It is impossible to tell how many actually failed to reach the performance standard unless the scores were disaggregated into individual scores. The President and those in Congress are not helping to make this confusing policy any clearer when they refer to "failing schools" as though everyone in the school is failing.

Under this bill, what we say is if a school fails in the first year, we are going to come in with some additional resources to that school and we are going to try to help that school improve. If by the third year, the school is still failing, we are going to say to the parent: All right, you have the right to do something with your children to try to improve their education because it is very obvious that you are not getting the benefit you need as a result of the way the school is functioning (Gregg, R-NH, S4071).

If that school fails one year and you have a child in that school – remember that child's face– and that school fails a second year–remember that child's face; they are trapped in that school; and think about it being your child–if they are trapped in that school for a third year of failure; meaning in academic performance, achievement, and ability to learn, but also safety issues– a school that might be unsafe in spite of doing everything you can in terms of establishing safeguards and investing in that school– and if your child is trapped in that unsafe school a fourth year, and they have not learned over those 4 years– the school itself is failing though you put more resources into it–then there needs to be repercussions. This is the American way of doing things (Frist, R-TN, S4057).

The American way of doing things, according to Senator Frist (R-TN), is to provide repercussions for failing and unsafe schools. He refers to resources, but nowhere in the NCLB debates or in the act are there requirements for "investing" in failing schools. He combines failure and safety with being trapped in a failing school. His

rhetoric paints an ugly picture of a child physically trapped in a building, but does not provide us with what constitutes an "unsafe" school or how a "failing" school causes children to fail.

Representative Pryce (below) refers to poverty as a handicap and blames the teachers for failing to teach children to read.

We know that 60% of children living in poverty are reading below the very basic level. We cannot expect these children to exceed (sic) with this handicap. At the same time, we destine these children to academic underachievement by our failure to teach them to read; we are denying them access to the world through books (Pryce, R-OH, H2299).

Senator Kyl (R-AZ) is putting the blame on teachers also (below). The language these Congressmen used is offensive to professional educators and not one of the individuals blaming the teachers has provided data to support their position. Senator Kyl is referring to the NEA when he says "education special interests" (below).

We should stop making excuses for failure and begin retiring the most tired excuse of all, which is that a lack of resources explains why our public school system is failing so many of our children - a lack of resources, of course, in the form of taxpayer dollars for education programs. The education special interests may come up short in educating the children who most desperately need the help, but they are experts at excuses. We need to ask the parents of children in failing schools. Would you rather the Government appropriate funds to fully fund your failing school or would you rather be given the freedom to enroll your child in one of these no excuses schools? (Kyl, R-AZ, S4391).

Several legislators remarked that competition in the schools will prevent or decrease failure. This notion comes out of the marketing model for education reform favored by some in Congress. Senators Kyl (R-AZ) and Gregg (R-NH) suggest that competition will help failing schools:

When you have a choice where you can send your children, not only are you able to take them to the school that best fits their needs and where they can excel

but the competition that is provided by those schools to the failing schools tends to bring the failing school up as well because as kids leave those schools, obviously people begin asking questions (Kyl, R-AZ, S4391).

We are giving parents some options—especially low-income parents, and especially single mothers in urban communities who have no options today—as a result of giving them these options and bringing competition into the school system, and it is competition that produces quality in our society, whether you choose to go to a Burger King over a McDonald's because of the competition or a McDonald's over a Burger King. In education, we have no competition today. We have no force for improvement that comes from the marketplace or that comes from the pressure of having to perform in order to get clients (Gregg, R-NH, S4072).

The word "freedom" (below) refers to vouchers and freedom to choose schools.

I believe that giving parents that freedom is the most certain path to improvement in education because parents, unlike politicians, are not going to accept excuses for failure (Kyl, R-AZ, 4392).

The requirement that Senator Gregg discusses below appears to me to be almost impossible for children to meet. If a parent moves a child to another school because the original school was deemed to be "failing", the child has to catch up immediately, to the level of those in the new school. This assumption that it is the schools that are failing could cause problems for families who are led to believe that merely changing schools will automatically solve whatever problems their child had with learning.

When you [the parent] do that [use the *choice* option], the conditions are that your child has to learn. That is the only thing we are going to hold you to. Your child is going to have to start to achieve as a result of leaving that school and going to another school. Your child is going to have to start achieving at the level that they should have achieved to be comparable with or equal to a child in their grade level who is in a school that is performing well. (Gregg, R-NH, S4071)

While still referring to schools as failing, Senator Reed (D-OH), nevertheless, makes a good point about allocating resources for the greatest good.

In these ongoing discussions, there is also included the notion of supplemental



services, the idea that in failing schools there will be money given for supplemental services. It seems to me that raises a very profound question: are you interested in merely giving a few children this option, because given the caps on this program, all children, even in the failing schools, may not be able to realize this program? Or are you interested in fixing the schools so that not only that class of children but succeeding classes of children will enjoy excellent education in a reformed, revitalized school? (Reed, D-RI, S4078).

Senator Clinton (D-NY) was one of the few who chose to emphasize how well students were doing rather than repeat the claims of failure.

We often only focus on the negative side of the ledger about how much we still have to do. I give some credit to the children and the young people our students and their parents, and especially the teachers, because we have seen progress. Reading and math scores for fourth graders in our highest poverty school districts have improved by nearly a grade level from 1994 to today (Clinton, D-NY, S3819).

The quote below from Senator Reed (D-RI) emphasizes that the rhetoric of failure does not tell the whole story.

One of the presumptions of this debate, for those who are suggesting that we engage in a regime of testing without adequate resources— one of the presumptions is the sense that our schools are failing America. There is another perspective. The perspective is that this Congress, and preceding Congresses, State Governors, and State assemblies have for years and years been failing our schools. We have not been giving them the resources they need. We have not been recognizing that educational problems today, in many cases, result from problems of health care for children, problems of poverty for children, problems of housing for children. Until we recognize these issues and until we confront these issues, not just rhetorically but, more importantly, with real resources and a real commitment, to say that our schools are failing America, is missing a much larger point (Reed, D-RI, S4079).

Representative Mink does not believe that the reforms will solve the real problems faced by teachers and students.

H.R.1 is written with the premise that if we test children enough, we'll know which students are failing and thus, which teachers and schools are failing. This legislation promotes the idea that if a child fails, the solution is to take away the teacher, or move the child to a different school. And it perpetuates this notion by



providing some funds to some schools that fail, but does little to ensure the school has enough resources to succeed in the first place (Mink, D-HI, H2401).

In the next section, I discuss the third cornerstone issue, parent involvement. I look at how the deficit model highlights perceived parental failures but does not address real issues like communication and mutual respect.

### **Parent Involvement**

Ryan (1971) defines cultural deprivation as a political and ideological hypothesis that explains differences in academic achievement of poor children compared to their middle-class peers that are "mediated by differences in the home" (p. 31). Studies have shown that a lack of particular kinds of experiences that prepare children for kindergarten in a middle-class school environment lead to problems adjusting to school for those children in the lower socioeconomic levels (Neuman, 2003). We develop programs to help prepare these children to start public school, but seldom ask the question, "What can we do to better prepare the schools for these children?"

Research has revealed that an unstable home environment negatively affects a child's ability to succeed in school (Mathis, 2004). Tied to this conviction, is the notion that the parents are to blame for what goes on in their home, so we tell the parents how they could do a better job. But rarely do we ask the parents what we, the educators, could do *for* them to help their child succeed in school. It is more difficult and more time-consuming to foster parent involvement that is advantageous to all concerned than it is to blame parents for perceived short-comings and pressure them to adjust to our programs, as Sarason points out in the following:

Frankly, I bristle when I hear people uttering the pious generalization that families should be involved in these programs, because in my experience those transactional relationships are superficial and ritualistic in the extreme. I am

reminded here of Public Law 94-142 which mandated a parental role in the education of a handicapped child. Practice has made a mockery of that mandate. But at least that law was unusually specific about the rights and roles of families. In the case of programming for four-year-olds, such specificity is almost always absent (1987, p. 126).

The following quote, from Representative Platts is one of only a few that refers to early childhood education and the Early Reading First Program, albeit while blaming the parents for their children's problems. This tendency to blame parents or accuse them of having deficiencies that cause problems for their children is one of the factors that negatively affects parent's willingness to be more involved in the schools.

An area I have a particular interest in is preschool education and the Early Reading First program. Too many children, because they come from broken families and shattered communities, first arrive at the schoolhouse already at a tremendous disadvantage. Quality Pre-K programs, such as those envisioned in Early Reading First, can do much to ensure that these kids will not have to spend their entire elementary years merely trying to catch up (Platts, R-PA, H2405).

Representative Platts' reference to "broken homes and shattered communities" is a representation of the tendency to shift blame from societal factors that perpetuate poverty to those who live in poverty. It is easy for a politician to propose a new education program guaranteed to eradicate poverty with the implication that pre-K and public school education are magic bullets. By refocusing the blame, lawmakers shift the responsibility for the evident irregularities in access and outcome that they have promised to reduce, onto the parents, teachers, and schools (Apple, 2004). Then they question why these same groups of parents are less likely to be involved in their child's education than other parents.

Quotes from both the President and Congress contain many instances where blame is directed toward parents and if not them, then toward the teachers or school administrators. Parent involvement appears to be a high-priority issue in educational

reform, but parents who have less income than others feel the stigma of poverty already and are going to be more cautious about becoming involved in the school if they feel others will single them out as being "deficient" or the cause of academic problems their children may exhibit. Some of the quotes in this section illustrate how entrenched the deficit model is in the minds of some individuals who have the power to effect change.

One of the best models for parent involvement is the Head Start program. It embraces the parent's role as being critical to the success of the program. Unfortunately, President Bush's educational reform blueprint does not espouse this level of parent involvement. While NCLB regulations do require schools to set up and administer a parent involvement program, the debates do not reflect an understanding of this regulation.

It's important for parents. There's a lot of discussion about parental involvement. Senator Kennedy asked a very good question--how is parental involvement? I thought the principal gave a very good answer. But there's no better way to encourage parental involvement than to diagnose, on a child-by-child basis, where a child stands. There's no better way to get a parent's attention than for a principal to send the word, "Well, we're having a little trouble with your child. We want your child to succeed." The worst thing that can happen from a parent's perspective is there be no information. The worst thing that can happen is that the parents think everything is fine. "Well, my child may have passed a test in the third grade, but there's been no measurement in the fourth, fifth, or sixth, so I will just assume as a parent that everything is fine," and then wake up and realize things aren't fine." To me, that's a shame when and if our systems do that to parents (Bush, Remarks at Merritt Extended Elementary School, 2001).

President Bush uses the phrase "parent involvement" in the first sentence of the above quote. He then mentions testing and the reporting of outcomes to parents as though this has not been done in the past. Parents have always had report cards sent to them from school at the end of each term, and most receive notice of their child's

achievement test scores at the end of the year or the beginning of the next. The President's rhetoric implies a lack of communication from teachers to the parents and his style of speech is condescending - as though teachers need to be told that parent involvement is important.

My analysis of the education reform discourse used by the President and the legislators reflects a disturbing trend: most of the politicians debating this education reform bill, including the President, either do not know or choose not to use their knowledge of how schools, and the teachers and support personnel working in the schools, function. Therefore, it is not surprising that so much blame occurs in this discourse. The politicians are making assumptions about why problems are occurring without doing the difficult work of finding out the real basis of problems in the schools.

Some of the quotes, like the one below from Representative Keller, are difficult to understand because reporting test scores to parents is not something new and it is not "parent involvement." Progress reports can facilitate better communication, but it appears that President Bush, along with some in Congress, equate testing and reporting to parent involvement. Do they believe that this is what parent involvement signifies? I do not really believe this to be the case, but I can find no clue to explain these puzzling statements except as they support the President's "crisis" in education. Representative Keller's remarks seem to me particularly abrasive and riddled with blame.

For the first time, more children are going to be able to read in this country. Parents are going to get a report card as to how their children's school is performing, and children now trapped in a failing school will have a safety valve to get out. It is important to realize that public school choice provides a nice safety valve for children trapped in these public schools. It gets them immediate relief. (Keller, R-FL, H2401)

Representative Dewine (below) faults parents, communities, school boards -

everyone but Congress - for children's reading problems. If an elected official believes that parents have the answers to problems in schools, one would assume that the parents would be brought into the discussion of what changes need to be made in education. It has not happened, however.

There is something wrong in this country when one-third of fourth graders cannot read. Where do we go from here? How do we go about changing our societal mindset and perceptions and our negligence in this country? The first thing we need to do is recognize that the answers lie mainly in the hands of parents, in our local communities, among our local school boards, and among our State and local governments—not in Washington. Nevertheless, Congress has a role to play, although a small one, in prioritizing or directing our limited Federal dollars where they can best help disadvantaged students in disadvantaged districts (Dewine, R-OH, S4022).

We have seen a huge amount of money spent on Title I over the last 20 years but we have seen, in fact, no improvement in the performance of low-income children, so they have been left behind. This bill tries to address that issue. It attempts to empower the parents, giving the parents a little bigger say in how their children are taught. If you are a parent and you are in a failing school, under today's rules, you have no rights. Your child is stuck in that school and there is virtually nothing you can do to help your child (Gregg, R-NH, S4071).

Representative Gregg's remarks sound as though he wants parents to be more involved their children's education. In fact, a meta-message is hidden in the phrases, "you have no rights" and "your child is stuck." Gregg was one of the Congressmen who pushed to have vouchers and school choice included in the NCLB Act and his statement was carefully worded to highlight supposed "problems" in the schools without using the word "voucher." This item was defeated because most in Congress were opposed to vouchers for private schools. But like President Bush, Representative Gregg used the parent involvement issue to sell another agenda. This same reasoning can be seen in Rep. Isakson's remarks, except he is wanting to use Title I funds for other purposes.

There are options in this bill, options for the children for the first time and their

parents. If a Title I child attends a public school that is ranked as failing, then where consistent with state law, that child will have the opportunity to transfer to a public school that is succeeding. For the first time, Title I funds will be used to allow transportation of that student to ensure their biggest problem, which is mobility, is overcome; and they can attend the school that is public that is best performing to meet their needs (Isakson, R-GA, H2396).

I used this quote from Representative Isakson because of the phrase, "for the first time." He believes this is the first time parents will have options in their child's education? Like Representative Gregg, Isakson, was pro-voucher and the word "option" is a euphemism for "voucher," just as others substituted the word "choice" for "voucher." He is one of many who refers to the failure of the school, rather than the students in the school. This may be a mechanism to sound as though one is not blaming the student for failure, but it still has the effect of blaming those in the school - the administrators, teachers, and students.

Senator Carper emphasizes the importance of early intervention programs, which is good, but he also points out that the problems children have are caused by the parents and their lack of training.

We have to consider that between 0 and age 5, kids will learn about half of what they know in their lives. If we waste the first 5 years, it is tough to get them back. We know that there is a lot more we can do in terms of parent training. A lot could be done in our States with respect to ensuring that healthier babies are born and raised. We can try to provide assistance with respect to quality child care and programs such as Head Start and make sure kids - and parents - are given a boost at the age of 3 or 4 and find themselves better prepared to be successful at the age of 5 (Carper, D-DE, S4080).

Senator Carper's reference to Head Start is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, he is a Democrat and most of the quotes regarding parents, generally, or parent involvement come from Republicans. Is this because the Republicans are joining their support of vouchers, or "choice," with discussions of parents or parent involvement? Is

it the reason why they are not using the parent involvement issue as a communication/ participation issue but as an opportunity to blame the “failing schools” and then offer parents their solution?

I believe their discourse was carefully planned to reflect their support for vouchers without using the politically-charged word. This is one of the best examples from the transcripts of putting meta-messages in the discourse. The second point I wish to make about Carper's quote is that he mentions Head Start and only Democrats mention Head Start in the transcripts of the debates. I have not been able to determine why this is so, but it might have been related to the Head Start debate that had just begun with regard to moving Head Start to the Department of Education. Support for this change was sharply divided down party lines.

Senator Carper could have used this opportunity to compare the model for parent involvement in the Head Start program with what was needed in the schools. Instead, he referred to Head Start as a possible route to get training for parents so their children would not be behind academically. He turned a positive model into a means for blaming parents for their children's problems, which was unfortunate.

Senator Frist's rhetoric (below) tends to be unusual. He frequently adds words and phrases to his speeches which are not within the context of the rest of his words.

We need to know how well schools and teachers and students are doing so we can assess from a national perspective and also legally empower parents to make choices for their children. We need to have that information (Frist, R-TN, S4057).

How does one legally empower parents? Is this even a possibility? He is also talking about needing to know “at the national level,” how individual schools are doing. This sounds like excessive micro-management of the schools and fortunately the final



wording of the Act did not contain this verbiage.

The following quote is from Representative Hoekstra, who was the only Republican to advocate voting against the bill in the House. His stance on the bill is the opposite of Senator Frist's. He believes that the parent involvement provisions have been weakened, not strengthened, and he laments the fact that local schools are going to have to report back to Washington on how they spend their money. Representative Hoekstra does support President Bush, but appears to believe that the President's goals are the same as his.

Regrettably, today I come to the floor today to voice my opposition to H.R.1. The flexibility for states has been eliminated. The parental empowerment has been weakened. The results accountability has been added to the bill, but the red tape where local school districts and states have to report back to Washington on how they spend their money has been maintained. We are now going to tell states and local school districts how they spend their money as well as the results they are going to get. What we are left with is Goals 2001, after we fought Goals 2000; and accountability putting us on the road to national testing and spending that only President Clinton could have dreamed of (Hoekstra, R-MI, H2399).

The quote below is from a Congressman who believes that the government does *not* have all the answers and who appears to understand that parent involvement is a process that takes place between parents and teachers. Representative Murkowski does not think Congress should be making decisions for those who know best.

We need to allow parents, teachers and schools to decide what is best for their children. I believe that decisions about a child's education should be made by people who actually know the child's name. (Murkowski, R-AK, S36)

The final quote on the parent involvement issue is from Senator Gregg, who I have cited several times already. He is an enigma in terms of his support for parents and children. He is for the choice option and vouchers and he believes that marketing strategies, i.e. competition, will benefit education. On the other side of the ideological



aisle, he appears to know what parent involvement really means and its importance. I will discuss the ideological implications of the rhetoric of the President and Congress in the next section.

The question of quality education I think we all understand is parent involvement. It is a good teacher, a good principal, but, most importantly it is a parent who gets involved in their child's daily activity of going to school and learning. Unfortunately, the Federal role in education has historically undermined the ability of the parent to be a participant in that activity. In fact, Title I, as it has been structured over the past 25-30 years, has been a school-based, bureaucracy-based mechanism. It has not been directed at benefitting the child so much as benefitting the bureaucracy which in turn theoretically benefits the child. As a result, I would argue that that is probably the primary reason Title I has failed, and "failure" I define as the fact that today the low-income child reads at two grade levels below their peers, and that is the same level of inefficiency or inability that the low-income child was reading at 20 years ago (Gregg, R-NH, S4071).

After careful analysis of all the remarks from the President and Congress with regard to parent involvement, it is evident to me that everyone believes that parent involvement is a good thing and that it should be fostered in our schools. The problem I have with the remarks, generally, is that too many of the parent involvement quotes do not address what parent involvement really means, what it should entail, or how it should be used. Parent involvement is not reporting scores and hoping that a parent will respond back to the school about their child's progress or lack of it. One cannot blame parents for their ineffectiveness while, at the same time, asking them to be more communicative with the staff and faculty of the schools.

Research applying an ecological approach to education and child development confirms the assumption that parent involvement increases the long-term outcome for their children (Zigler & Styfco, 1993). The communication between school and home should always be bidirectional and reciprocal; the school must communicate with the

parents and not wait for the parent to come to them.

Higher expectations alone cannot help children succeed. Negative experiences can foster a lack of motivation and inadequate environmental supports can result in underachievement. Ogbu's results from ecological studies of school effectiveness underscore the importance of bidirectional communication (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It must include accurate information, mutual trust, positive feelings, a sense of common goals, and especially, a balance of power responsive to the needs of the developing person and to the efforts of those acting on his behalf (p. 255).

Within the rhetoric of the three cornerstone issues are the ideologies of the politicians involved in the NCLB Act process. The following section highlights the importance of considering the role that ideological influences have in a study such as this one.

### **Ideological Implications**

We liken ideology to bad breath; it is what someone else has  
(Leonardo, 2003, p. 21).

The wording of the NCLB and the crisis rhetoric that led to its inception did not begin during the campaign of George W. Bush, but the latest round of educational crisis rhetoric began officially on April 26, 1983, with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, a report from the Reagan White House on the "crisis" in education. The first page of the report states:

Our nation is at risk. . . The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people. . . If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament. (1983, as quoted in Berliner and Biddle,

1995).

This report was fueled by the ideological beliefs of three groups that flourished in the 1980's and replaced the more liberal stance of the 1960's and 1970's. The Far Right, the Religious Right, and the Neoconservatives had already begun to blame education for society's ills, but the Reagan and Bush administrations gave them the platform for legitimacy they had not previously enjoyed (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

The Far Right blamed the government for the problems in American schools:

The most damaging blows to science and mathematics education have come from Washington. For the past 20 years, federal mandates have favored "disadvantaged" pupils at the expense of those who have the highest potential to contribute positively to society. . .by catering to the demands of special interest groups--racial minorities, the handicapped, women, and non-English speaking students (the Heritage Foundation, as quoted in Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 134).

The Religious Right was viewed as powerful enough to warrant attention from the Reagan and Bush White Houses. Comprised of individuals sharing the evangelical or fundamentalist beliefs of their leaders, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, they succeeded in pushing the issues of family values and prayer in school into the forefront of public agendas (Himmelman, 1990). They did not succeed in dismantling public education in favor of state-run and private education systems or in restricting the teaching of evolution, as they had hoped.

The Religious Right's emphasis that distinguished its ideology from other conservative ideologies was "moral traditionalism" (p. 97). Jerry Falwell noted the nation's moral "decay, brought about by a tide of permissiveness" (p. 98), was due to society's denial of God" (p. 98). Secular humanism was blamed for a perceived breakdown in education, government and the media The Religious Right's influence

continues to be seen in the blaming of schools and teachers for the lack of "moral or character education" in public schools (Thorne, 1990).

The Neoconservatives have had the most influence on education of the three right-wing groups as this faction has had individuals appointed to prominent positions in education in several Republican administrations. In the 1980's, William Bennett, Chester Finn, and Diane Ravitch, among others, advised the President that education was rife with problems that needed drastic action to solve. These problems could be solved through higher standards, a commitment to academic excellence, national tests, and more competitiveness - all traditional American values, they claimed (Kristol, 2006).

The influences of these three groups can be found throughout the NCLB legislation as well as within the rhetoric of the debates. In order to understand the issues, one has to have knowledge of the ideologies behind the issues.

Ideology is defined in Webster's dictionary, as either a system of ideas at the basis of a political theory or a manner of thinking characteristic of a class or individual (Soukhanov, 1984). When defined, it appears to be a simple concept but in application, ideology is a complex supposition with a frequently negative connotation associated with power and hegemony. Berger and Luckmann (1966) define ideologies as "ideas serving as weapons for social interests" (p. 6) and "socially distorted thought" (p. 12), always associated with power. Ideologies generate solidarity when a group of individuals create a reality based on vested interests.

Keil (1995) writing from a radical humanist perspective, views ideologies as value blueprints that emphasize the differences among people, thereby allowing injustices to be tolerated. He believes that ideologies block ethical considerations while creating "a

gap between appearance and reality" (p. 137).

Edelman (2001) contends that ideologies evoke stereotyped, often false, assumptions and beliefs that are proclaimed as fact. To neglect to investigate ideologies when one is studying discourse in a political arena is to miss the reasons why individuals respond as they do to the issues.

Political maneuvering consists of blaming and this paradigm of excusing inequalities in resources and the institutions that create them is a common component of such political blaming (Edelman, 2001. p. 62).

Leonardo (2003) researched the role of ideology in school reforms. He posits ideology as a worldview, a necessary organizing framework that integrates human subjects into social life. He says that school change is never neutral. "It projects a world that expresses possibilities. The "idea" of change necessitates a worldview, an ideology: how and what schools should educate and what role schools play in society" (p. 22).

President Bush strongly asserted his conservative ideology, calling himself a "compassionate conservative" (Brock, et al., 2005, p. 12), during his presidential campaign and in the beginning of his presidency. He borrowed the "compassionate" discourse from a progressive worldview that promotes social services and safety nets for the those who are economically disadvantaged. His educational motto, "I will leave no child behind," came from the Children's Defense Fund motto, an organization that considers itself to be progressive, dedicated to fighting the roots of poverty and injustice as advocates for children.

President Bush's desire to be seen as a "progressive" conservative was short-lived as his blueprint for educational reform was based more on principles of marketing and business, reflecting his personal educational background, than a progressive

educational pedagogy. The market model that is hidden in much of the verbiage of the NCLB Act is a neoliberal agenda, modeled by schools in England and Australia in the early 1990's before being considered here. Ideas once considered fanciful and unworkable, were now being seen as common sense reforms (Apple, 2004).

The market model can be found in rhetoric that espouses competition over cooperation and that shifts the emphasis from student's needs to student's performance (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Instead of asking, "What can this school do for this child?" the Neoliberal ideology asks, "What can this child do for the school?" They look at where resources are being used in the school and attempt to determine if groups that have low aggregated test scores are receiving too great a share of the available funds. Children in special education always lose out in these comparisons and their "worth" as a commodity, using the marketing language, is very low (Apple, 2004). The marketized systems of education promote a fear of the "other" and radicalized education policies based on this model shift the blame for inequalities in access and outcome to the teachers, parents, and students.

The Neoliberal visions of school reform, paired with the Neoconservative agenda generated pressures to regulate content and behavior through national curricula, standards and national systems of assessment. Research from New Zealand in the 1990's demonstrated that marketized education reforms most negatively affected those who had the most disadvantages. The lower-class students were seen as having fixed, unmovable abilities and were discouraged from attending school while underachieving middle-class students were viewed as being valuable due to their untapped possibilities (Apple, 2004).

If educational reform is the "ideological struggle" suggested by Leonardo (2003, p. 240), why did the politicians in Congress who consider themselves to be progressive, not struggle harder to defeat or overturn the conservative and neo-liberal ideology that was influencing NCLB? Most of the struggling or disagreeing that occurred during deliberations was about resource allocations in this legislation or concerned the timing of the debates, both of which I purposely left out of my study. Many of the liberals who voted for the bill, soon came out publically against it - Senator Kennedy (D-MA) being one of these individuals (NEA, 2003). How did this group of liberal democrats miss the content of the bill? Did they not realize beforehand the degree to which conservative ideologies influenced the principles of President Bush's reform blueprint?

Goodlad (1983) reminds us that policies reflect interests and values, "their substance resulting from one set of interests winning out over another" (p.301).

Furthermore, he says:

Those seeking to influence policy seek out research that supports their views, eschewing research that does not. The astute political maneuver is to make it appear that solid evidence dictated the policy, rather than admitting that the proposed policy limited the search for truth. This is particularly desirable when political debate is in a domain where alternative theories and sketchy evidence prevail, as is often the case in matter of education and schooling (p. 301)

The politicians who professed a conservative ideology supported the crisis rhetoric that began this reform process. I have chosen to call the rhetoric associated with the reform, a "conservative educational reform discourse," as it was an extension of the reform discourse that began in the Reagan administration in the 1980's. Proclaiming a crisis, whether real or imagined, is an established vehicle for starting a reform process. It is not difficult to find research that supports an agenda and the conservative agenda used the warnings from "A Nation at Risk," published in 1983,



along with the National Reading Panel's report to support their cause.

Once a crisis was proclaimed and backed up with facts and figures, omitting any dates or citations that did not support the reform agenda, the conservative educational reform discourse spotlighted the achievement gap as proof of the crisis. The achievement gap has been used as a device to blame children from the lower socioeconomic levels for their reported inability to achieve at the same academic level as their middle-class peers. Conservative ideology holds that all children need to think and act like middle-class children and use this as their standard to judge those who have not had the experiences that their more privileged counterparts have had.

Kaufmann (2002) points out that the achievement gap cannot be closed and that the notion of an achievement gap is faulty in the first place. To deny that students differ in what they have learned and the rate at which they can learn, he says, "is an evasion of reality" (p. 139). Bush's goal of raising every student to a standard of excellence and seeking greater uniformity among students' performance is a fallacy. It cannot be done. The conservative discourse of excellence denies the fact that good education increases differences between students.

A graph of students' abilities normally results in a bell-shaped curve with exceptional students on either side. This mathematical distribution, the standard distribution, cannot be wished away by one's ideological stance, and the differences in achievement should never be viewed as a negative outcome. Students are not equal in their abilities and they will not be equal in their test scores and no amount of reform rhetoric or new policies can change the normal distribution of abilities. Education can be improved and student's learning can be improved, but if this happens, there will still be



a normal distribution of scores.

When the Children's Defense Fund originated the idea to leave no child behind, they were referring to the goal of improving living conditions for every child. They were concerned with the skyrocketing poverty rates for children in this country and the associated issues of poor health and inadequate nutrition. The Bush administration's use of this term has no connection to the realities that children who live in poverty face. Schools did not create poverty and social disadvantage. Schools cannot change home environments or the society's perceptions of individuals who live in poverty.

The conservative education reform discourse does nothing to improve the lives of children. The Conservatives cannot meet the unrealistic goals they created, but will probably continue to blame others for the shortcomings of those in positions of power. Those who do not embrace the conservative ideology have not been willing or able to exert enough pressure to overcome this misguided discourse, so their lack of influence contributes to the effects the deficit model has on children and their families.

Katz (1987) offers a general principle that says any field characterized by a weak data base has a vacuum that is filled by ideologies. The field of early childhood education has an inherently weak data base, she says, for one reason, because children change so rapidly that it is "difficult to discriminate among change effects by treatment versus maturation alone" (p. 152). Thus many issues in the schools concerning young children are debated from ideological positions.

The conservative discourse devalues the contributions of the practitioners of education - the teachers - even though reform efforts affect them more than any other group. As reform decisions are made, the voices of teachers are muted and their

authority diminished. By focusing too narrowly on test scores, the reformers outside of education have not considered the teachers' needs for both time and resources devoted to classroom management or motivation issues related to the conditions and impacts of poverty on their students (Cheek, 2002).

Ideologies have had the effect of increasing blame toward teachers and families, have devalued children who come from low income environments, have shifted blame for increasing social injustices to those they blame, but most of all, have not led to an education reform package that will improve learning. Ideologies have hidden flawed program development (the premises for the Reading First Initiative and Early Reading Initiative), have hidden flawed research, and have allowed fallacious rhetoric to cover up hidden agendas embedded into the NCLB Act. Ideologies have helped to promote flash-in-the-pan "exemplary" programs that have no research to back claims of success and have ignored the advice of true "experts" - those who have spent years in a classroom. Education has problems that need to be fixed, but the NCLB has little hope of effecting real reform because so much of the "reality" of education was hidden behind ideological blinders. Gonzalez states it best when she says:

What cannot be forgotten, is that . . . there are flesh-and-blood students and teachers caught up in the eye of the storm. When disciplinary, ideological, political, and social borders cease to be the focus of attention, perhaps we can turn to what really matters in quality education: students and teachers (2004, p. 23).

## **Conclusions**

The President is able to exert a great deal of influence on the direction of educational reforms, especially when the party in control of the Congress is the same as the President's, as was the case with George Bush in 2001. Education is an issue that

everyone wants to support as no politician is going to commit political suicide by speaking out against education. The direction that reforms take can be politically charged and ideologically influenced, so the party *not* in power has to be especially strong to go against the President, his administration, and both houses of Congress. In the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Democrats were not strong enough to do much more than keep vouchers from being approved - they were not able to sway any Republicans to their side of the issues. The late Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) was the most vocal opponent of the President's reform package and he had a handful of Senators behind him, but in the end, President Bush got everything he wanted from his Blueprint for Reform except vouchers.

### Testing

The issue of testing is about much more than taking tests. The NCLB Act has woven testing into accountability for results and standards of the curriculum to the point that the tests are becoming the curriculum. The conservative educational reform discourse has married success with having standards and testing, believing that without the testing, failures cannot be identified and deficiencies corrected. This discourse also falsely assumes that by forcing schools to meet high standards, every student can achieve excellence. The marketing model which has crept into the new requirements treats students as commodities, "undifferentiated lumps of wax to be molded into a preconceived shape" (Richman, 2001, p. 10).

Along with the question of the usefulness of President Bush's extensive testing program, is the issue control and regulation. Who should be in control of the nation's schools? Even Congress says it should be the state and local education boards, but the

legislation does not back up this notion. Actually, the NCLB has added more federal regulations to the ESEA than were included previously. The states have to report their successes and failures to the federal government, and although the federal share of education budgets hovers around 7%, the amount of control they wield is far greater. Given the increased control they have awarded themselves in educational matters, one would assume Congress would also shoulder a greater share of the responsibility when problems arise.. This is not the case, especially when there are so many groups to choose from when looking for a scapegoat. Teachers and schools were the favorite target for blame in these deliberations, with students and their families close behind.

Early childhood education did not escape the testing debate as those who favor testing as a means of improving education believe that the same logic should apply to early intervention programs, including Head Start. Most troubling is the new testing of four-year-olds in Head Start as a means to determine if Head Start is teaching what it should be teaching. There is a mistaken belief by the policy makers that Head Start is where the "achievement gap" can be eliminated (Meisels, 2004).

This was, I believe, the most unfortunate piece of data that I uncovered in my research. The testing programs inserted into the elementary schools are too narrowly focused and are not likely to have the desired effect of improving achievement, but giving four-year-olds a standardized test is a step in the wrong direction. I do believe that it is good to find out, at the end of a school year, what children have learned, so that the teacher next year has an idea of where the child's strengths and weaknesses are. However, there are so many variables that can affect a testing outcome for four-year-olds, it would be difficult to tell if the tests were valid or not.

## Failure

The Congressmen who remarked that the schools were failing or that all the students in a school were failures or even that one group - i.e., the "disadvantaged" students - failed, incorrectly labeled students to be failing with no statistics to show that this was, in fact, true. Those referring to the failing students either did not know how reporting procedures worked, or simply chose not to state the facts correctly, for rhetorical purposes. Students will fail sometimes, it cannot be avoided, but it has to be looked at by educational experts who are best able to determine how to help an individual child. Blaming schools and teachers and parents for student's failures does not solve problems and the members of Congress are so far removed from what is truly going on in classrooms that they are the least able to judge what solution would best help a problem. Painting educational problems with a broad brush as though the figures on the canvas were all the same, can only result in a muddle of solutions with no clear delineation of the uniqueness of each student and their situation. If any group is to blame for failures in education, I would have to point to the ideologues who were more concerned with their agendas than they were with the students and what was best for them.

Early childhood education was impacted by the notion of failure because third grade, the last year falling under the early childhood category, is the cut-off grade designated by the NCLB Act for children to learn to read proficiently. All students will *not* be able to read proficiently by the third grade, some never; there is too great a variation in ability. Because those in power refused to concede this fact, many schools were set up to fail under the new requirements. Some in Congress believed that early childhood

education should have had a greater role in preventing failure when alluding to the lack of preparation to begin school or to those beginning school already behind the others.

Head Start is funded to accept only 70% of the eligible children, so the onus is on Congress to do something about better preparing children for kindergarten in the public schools. We desperately need more quality early childhood education programs for those who will profit from the types of experiences and opportunities that will prepare them to attend public school (Zigler, 1987).

### Parent Involvement

The most surprising finding from the issue of parent involvement was the apparent confusion of the President and some in Congress between the reporting of scores to parents and involvement by the parents in their children's schools. There were several instances of a politician remarking that if a parent just knew how their child was doing, he or she could be better involved with the school. Parents were blamed for not doing enough for their children and teachers were blamed for not communicating with the parents. Too many parents were said to be deficient and not involved enough with their child.

While it is true that some parents are not involved in their children's education, one cannot make general statements about a particular group of parents because of their disadvantaged economic situations. Money is not an indicator of parent involvement; in fact, parents in affluent communities are not always as involved as teachers would like. All negative remarks with regard to parents were directed toward parents who were poor, as is almost always the case. This group has been tagged with deficient labels and those in power refuse to remove them.

Overall, the parent involvement rhetoric was disappointing for what it lacked. No one in either Chamber of Congress made any reference to the model for parent involvement that the Head Start program has provided for 40 years. Everyone agreed that parent involvement was a good thing but they did not seem to understand how to get parents involved in the schools or what the roles of either the teachers or the parents should be. They blamed parents for the children's learning problems but said parents needed to have more rights.

The NCLB Act has problems because too many false assumptions were made by individuals being led by their ideologies rather than empirical evidence. The preponderance of blame directed toward those without the power to effect change was akin to a bandwagon that everyone wanted to ride. It was not limited to Republicans or those on one side of Congress - it was manifested throughout all entire spectrum of the reform process.

When I began this study and decided to investigate whether the deficit model had an effect on the process of reform, I actually voiced a concern that I would not find enough evidence to prove its existence. I suspected that I would find some examples and I thought these examples would be limited to a those with a particular agenda. While I did find that those with a conservative ideology were more likely to assign blame and cite instances of deficiencies, this was not strictly limited to this group of individuals.

Those who live with poverty year in and year out carry a heavy burden not only from the difficulties of their situation, but also from the negative consequences of being blamed for their problems. Bronfenbrenner was right when he said we need a new

paradigm through which to view those who have little money and fewer opportunities (Bronfenbrenner & Weiss, 1983). President Bush's Blueprint for Reform will not reform education because he did not outline what the problems really were and therefore could not design a blueprint for real change. Mandating excellence will have the effect of highlighting failure. Spending too much precious school time on a narrow curriculum that forces testing of "basic skills" that it can be argued is not supported by valid research, is not a recipe for success. Possible outcomes of this legislation are teachers who are so frustrated that they quit, students so demoralized that they drop out, and states so dismayed at results that they refuse federal money despite budget shortfalls.

The NCLB Act is a paradox of mammoth proportions. While claiming to leave no child behind, it legislates requirements that are more likely to increase failure, especially in particular groups of children, than improve outcomes. Few educators, those with the knowledge of the real problems and ideas for real solutions, were involved in the actual writing of the legislation. The President, instead, relied on the expertise of his hand-picked advisors - some of whom were lawyers and businessmen who had never worked in a classroom. Ideologies played too great a role in the development of the NCLB and it will be left to the teachers, administrators, and even the parents to find a way to convert ideologies into strategies for success in the schools. I believe that the educational professionals will find a way to make it work even if the means to the end are not what the politicians envisioned. Despite problems inherent in the policy, learning continues to take place in the classrooms because teachers have a mandate of their own on which to rely.



## **Recommendations**

This study is the only one that I know of in which the data for analyzing the NCLB came from the actual rhetoric of the debates and I believe this study will add to the knowledge of the NCLB policy process beyond what others have published to date. My results were predicated on the knowledge that the application of a deficit model influenced the rhetoric of much of the debates. President Bush shared a conservative ideology with the majority of the politicians involved in this process and this greatly influenced the direction of the policy.

Should the NCLB be revised when the time comes for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to be reauthorized, a similar study using data from an entirely different presidential administration - a liberal or progressive worldview rather than the conservative one of the Bush administration - would provide an interesting comparison with these results. Would the passage of time and a different ideological stance result in a paradigm of concern that supports an ecological viewpoint of education? Or would a change of ideology in the White House still produce the same results?

This study was limited by what the politicians chose to talk about, which, as I found out after writing my first set of research goals, was not as easy to predict as I had anticipated. I had hoped for the entire study to address Head Start and early childhood education programs, but when only a handful of Senators referred to either Head Start or early childhood, I had to revise the direction of the study.

Since I have neither the power to change the ideologies of those who have the authority to make policy, nor the influence to assert my views on a great number of people, there is little I can do about recommendations for change except exercise my

option to vote for the candidates I believe will most likely have a positive effect on education. I would like to see an ecological model applied more generally to educational concerns, especially in early childhood education. The application of this model would reduce the tendency of those in positions of authority to look for deficiencies and, would instead, aid in developing a worldview that emphasizes strengths rather than weaknesses.

My goal for this study was to discover what was going on during the process of debating the NCLB, and I succeeded in discovering much more than I had anticipated. I wanted to know if the President had an influence in the development and passage of this bill and I found out that many in Congress voted with the President, not because of his knowledge of educational matters, but because he was the President. I was disappointed to realize the extent to which the deficit model was being applied to children living in poverty and also the extent to which politicians blamed parents and teachers for all the problems in the schools.

There were individuals who impressed me with their dedication to the cause of education. I felt like I got to know Paul Wellstone through his remarks during the deliberations and was saddened when he was killed in a plane crash. We need more like him in Congress to fight for children's rights and to advocate for doing what is best for children and families, even if you make enemies in the process. He was an individual worth emulating and hopefully more just like him will find their way into public office.

This is a very interesting debate. You never know when you come to the floor of the Senate whether you are going to be informed or entertained. And sometimes it is a portion of both. Senator Dorgan (D-ND), on the debates of the NCLB

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## VITA

Winnifred Diane Hall, better known as Wendy, was born in Norman, Oklahoma, on August 23, 1954. In July 1960, she moved to Norris, Tennessee, where her father was employed with the Tennessee Valley Authority. Here she began first grade at Norris Elementary School in August 1960 and Norris High School from where she graduated in 1971, having skipped her Junior Year of High in order to graduate a year early. She began college at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in the fall of 1971, but transferred to Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tennessee, the following fall. She became the first female police officer in the Middle Tennessee area in 1974, but after a year's employment, returned to school, graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology in June 1977. Wendy completed a Master's degree in Special Education in June 1978, and accepted her first teaching position with the Tennessee Department of Corrections as the state's first special education teacher for incarcerated adolescent girls with disabilities at the Highland Rim School for Girls in Tullahoma, Tennessee. She accepted a position as the Director of Eagle Knob Learning Center in Robbinsville, North Carolina, in 1980, and in 1982, began work as a special education teacher at the Knoxville Adaptive Education Center in Knoxville, Tennessee. In 1985, Wendy joined the U.S. Naval Reserve Forces as an Intelligence Specialist which eventually led to her being offered employment at the Navy and Marine Corps Intelligence Training Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia, as the Academic Officer for Marine Corps Intelligence Training. After a serious car accident in which she became disabled, Wendy returned to the University of Tennessee in August 1997 pursue a doctorate in Early Childhood Education. The Doctor of Philosophy degree was completed in August 2006.

